RE/BRAIDING CATRACHA*NESS:* THE *TESTIMONIOS* OF SUBVERSIVE VOICES

A Dissertation
Submitted to the Graduate Faculty
of the
North Dakota State University
of Agriculture and Applied Science

By

Dina Yamileth Zavala-Petherbridge

In Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements
for the Degree of
DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

Major Program
Education
Option: Occupational and Adult Education

September 2016

Fargo, North Dakota

North Dakota State University
Graduate School

Title

Re/braiding Catracha*ness* the *Testimonios* of Subversive Voices

By

Dina Yamileth Zavala-Petherbridge

The Supervisory Committee certifies that this ***disquisition*** complies with North Dakota State University's regulations and meets the accepted standards for the degree of

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

SUPERVISORY COMMITTEE:

Dr. Nathan Wood
Chair

Dr. Elizabeth Roumell Lanphier

Dr. Aida Martinez-Freeman

Dr. Carrie Anne Platt

Approved:

09/29/2016
Date

Dr. William Martin
Department Chair

ABSTRACT

The current literature about rural feminists in Central American countries lacks details about the experiences women like my Grandmother had. The physical and social realities of my Grandmother breathed collective participation, self-reflection, critical thought, and personal development connected to the social struggle. Becoming an engaged social activist gave her a chance to reflect and act, which are the elements for *concientización.* Once she became emancipated, she was part of the social change by providing others and me the guidance to our freedom. The simple fact that women acted against an oppressive society, and they took control of their own reproductive rights demonstrates the will of women to find a way to make change and create agency.

Writing this dissertation is my way of carrying on my Grandmother's legacy, as well as a means to create a space for rural feminist women from the next generation. My narrative offers everyday life discourses inversely related to those presented by the collective organized feminist movement narratives. In this research, I use *testimonio* as the method of inquiry and product through which my Grandmother's and my narrative are braided and re-braided as a symbolic way to construct and deconstruct narratives, terms, and journeys. I completed this process under the lenses of theory in the flesh, Freire's social emancipatory theory, and Mestiza consciousness. *Una conscientización* embodies and lives in context, no longer abstracted; therefore it embodies social and biological concepts of physical realities creating a generative resistance. I conclude this study with a reflection on the research process and future direction.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

During my lifetime, I have learned how to make different types of *trenzas*, and some have been more complicated than others. In order for me to learn to *trenzar* (braid) my own hair, I have been fortunate to meet other individuals who have been already braiding and re-braiding longer than I have. As they helped me learn, each of these people were aware that it was imperative for me to learn how to braid my story and each time I practiced, I was learning to trust my personal ability to craft the one I could proudly carry as a symbol of my own identity.

I must first acknowledge my advisor Dr. Nathan Wood, who accepted me as his advisee during a time when I felt lost. Thank you for supporting my journey, reading my work, and walking with me in this new adventure. You were one of my first instructors in this doctoral route, and you were the first one who made me explore new paradigms.

To my co-advisor Dr. Elizabeth Lanphier Roumell who believed in me since the beginning of my doctoral career, and advised me without taking my voice away: thank you for your expertise, and for your continual feedback of my work. You advised me early on in my doctoral career to consider a qualitative study of my Grandmother's journey. I will always be grateful for that.

A mi hermana Dra. Aida Martinez-Freeman, me hiciste regresar al camino que había dejado. Gracias por tomar mi mano, llorar conmigo, abrazarme y recordarme que ¡Si se puede! Por tu infinita discusión sobre nuestro valor como mujeres latinas y educadores en este país. Te prometo que lo que tu hiciste por mí, yo lo haré por otras.

Thank you Dr. Carrie Anne Platt for your expertise and suggestions to enhance this study. I am grateful for your support and your commitment to my success. I benefited immensely from your encouragement.

A mi amigo Dr. Anthony Dutton, por siempre apoyarme en las buenas y en las malas, por ser como un hermano y velar por mi bienestar.

A mis amigos Luis Alejandro Betancur y Lic. Guadalupe Urbán por su asistencia técnica con el uso del idioma español.

DEDICATION

I didn't get here alone, and I have always acknowledged people who one way or another contributed to the success of my professional and personal life. Hurtado (2010), reminds us not to deny our spiritual needs and nurturance because by denying them, it creates physical and social obliterations. So, for me, I feel a spiritual imperative to begin this process by dedicating my work to two worlds: the one in Honduras and the one in the United States.

To the family in Honduras, I dedicate this work to five individuals who were next to me during my childhood and younger years: my grandparents Efrain and Teodora, my great Grandmother Braulia, my mother Enma, and my brother Nelson who left this earth too soon.

Efrain y Teodora: Les dedico este doctorado en agradecimiento por criarme y amarme como una hija, por creer en mi, y guiarme. Jamás podre regresarles todo lo que ustedes han hecho por mi, pero les aseguro que su legado siempre será recordado por las nuevas generaciones de nuestra familia.

Mamita Braulia: Le dedico este doctorado por darme una abuela guerrera, que me enseñó lo que usted le enseñó. También por sus consejos y enseñanzas sobre la necesidad del equilibrio entre la naturaleza y la humanidad.

Enma: Le dedico este doctorado por darme vida y amarme. Por enseñarme a ser una mujer fuerte en los tiempos más difíciles y por creer en el amor.

Nelson: Te dedico este doctorado por ser mi mejor amigo y enseñarme a sonreír. Por enseñarme a soñar. Tus hijos siempre serán mis hijos.

To the ones in United States, I dedicate this work to three individuals who are my life.

Steven: This is for us! Thank you for always being there for me, for believing in me, and for walking this journey alongside me. You are my rock!

Tanisha: I dedicate this work to you for becoming the reason I stayed in this country. For embracing your catracha*ness.* For being so passionate about life, and truly believing in equality for all. You will make waves in this world!

Thomas: I dedicate this work to you for reminding me of a better world, and for making me smile, and being so kind to others. You will be a great man!

TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF FIGURES

PROLOGUE

What is working is the people and what is broken is our approach – (Mia Birdsong, TED Radio Hour, May 5, 2016).

My grandparents owned a few cows that they milked only for their own consumption. In the morning, it was my brother's job to milk them, move them again to the pasture, and in the afternoon, collect them for next-day milking. I rarely helped, but sometimes in the afternoon, my job was to fetch the calves to put them in the small corral that my Grandfather and brother had built next to the house.

One afternoon, I could not find my Grandmother, so I asked my great Grandmother where my Grandmother was. She answered— ¡afuera! She went to fetch the calves because tomorrow morning she is milking the cows.

Tomorrow morning? Isn't it that my brother's job? - I asked with curiosity.

No. She is taking over milking the two cows, my great Grandmother responded.

Later that afternoon while I was helping my great Grandmother prepare dinner in the small adobe kitchen, my Grandmother came in because she had fetched the calves, and placed them in the corral. I remember her face looked flustered, and her curly hair was messy because she had to chase the calves all over the hill. She was wearing her black rubber boots, her flowery blue dress and her mismatched apron. She entered the kitchen all up in arms because she had to be ready for next day; she had decided to begin to sell milk. Once inside the kitchen, she ordered me to tell all my classmates that she was selling milk, so they could also go and tell their parents. Her milk business quickly boomed. Women from the community were the primary customers, and they would arrive in the morning to buy one cup, two cups, or half liter of milk every day. Some women would drink their milk there, but others would take it with them. Soon, word got out that

my Grandmother was selling fresh milk, and women from other communities started walking great distances to buy milk too. She was a successful entrepreneur in milk products. I remember that all the women who came would sit in the kitchen, and spend a long time speaking with my Grandmother. All morning long, the kitchen in our house was full of women. Sometimes, I ate in the patio because there was not a place for me to sit—every stool, chair, or step in the kitchen was a sitting place for a woman from the community.

Things were going well, however, months later, rumors began to spread that there was something wrong with the milk my Grandmother was selling. Women who were buying milk from her were not getting pregnant. Men began to prohibit their partners from buying any milk products from my Grandmother because they were scared they were also not going to be able to get their partners pregnant. Every day during recess, I was always asked by a classmate if it was true that there was something wrong with the milk, to which I always responded, "nada" [nothing].

One morning, I learned what was really happening in our kitchen. I learned that every morning women who were coming to buy milk were also taking the birth control my Grandmother was distributing from her home center. Women wanted control over their reproductive rights so badly that they had conspired with my Grandmother to create a safe space, una comadre [a sisterhood] outside the walls of society and church. They were so afraid to be found out by their partners, or the church, that my Grandmother kept their contraceptives in a drawer, each one labeled with their names. That is what was going on in a small white adobe kitchen in rural Honduras. I know sometimes, women could not afford their contraceptives; yet, my Grandmother never stopped providing them. I know that in addition to that, Grandmother was a confidant for the woman who had an abortion, a counselor for the

woman whose husband was having an affair, a nurse for the woman who was a victim of domestic violence, and a shelter for the woman and her children who were running away from an abusive relationship.

CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

"We know what we know from where we stand. We have our own truth, we walk our own truth wherever that is" (Kovach, 2013).

Limpiando Casa: Cleaning House

If you visit a rural community in Honduras, you will see poverty everywhere, but you will also notice that houses are always clean. It is customary to have an open door policy for visitors: you can visit unannounced any day and time. Due to this custom, women clean their houses every day, so they are ready for visitors. I am using this as a metaphor to open this writing space for your visit because you will encounter a different narrative than the one you may be used to.

In this narrative, I had to put aside twelve years of Western pedagogy that had been ingrained in me. I completed my undergraduate and graduate degrees in the United States, which was ideologically challenging for me. I learned very early that writing in the first person was not considered appropriate for academic writing in Western pedagogy; therefore, I upheld the academic rule throughout my academic career and faithfully maintained it. This belief hijacked my voice, which struggled to come to terms with this newfound epistemology in conjunction with who I was.

It is throughout the writing of this dissertation that I found ways to unpack, and regain confidence in my voice. The first book that gave me permission to do so was *Research is Ceremony* by Shawn Wilson (2008). His book was an example of what writing using our own voices really sounds like. I now understand that the lack of appreciation for a voice in the first person had to do with the challenge that I brought to an oppressive academic culture, where only the elites and the elites by association got to participate in the exclusive academic club because

otherwise, it was a direct challenge to the prescribed and oppressive White supremacy of academic culture—an academic club that denied access to oppressed voices because they disrupted the *status quo.*

Getting to this reflective point was not an easy process because it required me to denounce what I had believed to be true for many years. I now see that the knowledge we carry is also valid and can substantiate our work (Taylor, 2013). I understand the power of writing in the first person and using my own voice. "To write, to be a writer, I have to trust and believe in myself as the speaker, as a voice for the images" (Anzaldúa, 2007, p. 95). This writing process liberated me, helped me reflect, act, and move in this doctoral journey. Additionally, it created agency and space for others who, in the future, will be pursuing an opportunity to become *mujeres liberadas* [liberated women] in the exclusive Western academic world. This is the beginning of my subversive state, and my generative resistance.

Mi Casa Es Su Casa: Welcome

Now that I have cleaned my space for you to enter, I would like to welcome you inside my home. I welcome you to my newly cleaned and renewed space. I hope you read my welcoming sign at the entrance. In the Honduran home, the majority of the houses display two signs in their entrances. one indicates the faith they belong to, and the other is a welcoming message that reads *Bienvenidos, mi casa es su casa* [Welcome, my home is your home]. This sentence truly represents the essence of the Honduran culture, which is our hospitality and generosity despite our economic and social struggles. Altamira Still Cole, a New York woman who traveled to Honduras in 1891, wrote in her diary her experiences staying in rural homes while making her journey from the Pacific coast to the country's interior. In her account, she describes how peasants, despite having nothing, opened their homes to strangers and shared all

that they had (2015). This tradition continues to be accurate to Honduran culture, and we continue to welcome our guests and share what we have, even though sometimes they overstay, or interpret who we are in their own terms without asking *us* who are the protagonists of their narratives. My initial hesitation for sharing my narrative was exactly that; I was afraid to be the target of cultural misconceptions by the reader.

In travelers' books, Honduran women have been the target of generalizations and misinterpretations. One example is Humphrey's (1997) description of rural women in his book *Honduran Handbook: Including the Bay Islands and Copan.* He described rural Honduran women as staying indoors, and keeping quiet. In the same statement, he also adds that a "budding" feminist movement was surging, but it had a long way to go. Humphrey made many inaccurate claims based on his perceptions because he neglected to add that by the time his book was published, rural Honduran women had been fighting since the early 1900s alongside men for better pay in the banana plantations, land reform, and access to reproductive rights, among other social issues. As of today, I have not found a rebuttal to his writings. I cannot simply accuse Humphrey of his generalizations and misconceptions of a culture, because his behavior is innate, and we all have behaved the same, one way or another in our lifetimes. It is for this reason that I am inviting you to be part of this journey and learn from the perspective of a rural woman herself. The misrepresentation of our culture and of rural women in particular goes hand-in-hand with the lack of cultural awareness by researchers. It is for the latter reason that I see this dissertation as an opportunity to speak *my* truth, and to offer an insight on rural women at a personal level.

In this dissertation, I am welcoming the audience to read about the journeys of my Grandmother and I in a different format. Shawn (2008) explains that our writing format indicates

an intention to build relationships with the reader in order to understand the paradigm we use. I ask the reader to let me be the guide, to be open minded and to consider other possibilities. The reader will encounter stories that are formatted in italics, and these stories were written with the sole purpose of enhancing the narrative, and offering a context of life in the rural area. These stories are excerpts from the larger tales I have collected over the years. Additionally, each story will contain names of individuals who were part of that narrative, and in order for me to protect their identities I only use the first letter of their names. In the case of individuals who may have the same letter, I added the second letter. Another issue the reader may encounter is the presentation of my grandparents as parents in some stories. I was raised by my grandparents and I call them "Mom" and "Dad." However, for the purpose of this dissertation, I mostly use Grandmother and Grandfather.

***Trenza* as a Symbol**

Another effect the reader will encounter will be my *testimonios* embedded in the literature review. I call this process *trenzando* [braiding] because I inserted each *testimonio* within the literature review.

Figure 1. A trenza as a metaphor. This is a picture taken when I participated as a dancer for the Folklore Dance group at the Universidad Pedagógica Francisco Morazán (UPNFM). I am pictured wearing the purple dress. The trenza was an imperative symbol that represented our Honduran identities.

In the Honduran culture, a *trenza* is an inherently feminine symbol of our ancestry, beauty and strength, and perhaps of compliance that dictates of an older generation. In the dance troupe from the UPNFM, all young women wore them in a specific way to symbolize tradition, norms and beauty that also represented personal expression, and pride. The process of braiding hair is reminiscent of strength in numbers and of unification.

In Chicana and Latino literature, the *trenza* is a symbol of multiple identities, and a way to construct narratives—re-braided ideas (Gonzalez, 2010). In this dissertation, I am using *trenza* to embed stories and my *testimonios*, as well as a symbol of constructing and deconstructing narratives and identities. Now that the reader is aware of the process, I would like to once again, open the door, and welcome you to read about our stories.

Statement of Research Objectives

The research objectives for this study are designed to create agency for women scholars who are pursuing holistic ways to offer their narratives. Additionally, I seek to offer a new

perspective of the feminist movement in rural Honduras by Honduran women. Therefore, creating spaces for intergenerational narratives that offer insights on the movement at the micro-level is important in this process.

This research is guided by the following objectives:

First, this study is designed to demonstrate the feminist journey of rural Honduran women at the micro-level, so researchers in the field who come from rural backgrounds consider including their personal narratives. Second, this study is designed to create holistic spaces by going back to testimonial methodologies that align with Central American cultural contexts. This testimonial methodology opens the door for Honduran researchers who are considering the use of non-Western research paradigms, therefore expanding testimonial literature written in their own voices. Third, this study is designed to honor silenced voices that need to be heard. By embedding my Grandmother's voice in this narrative, I bring intergenerational conversations and wisdom, both honoring my country's customs, which is an imperative component for this type of research.

This research is also an example of the struggle Women of Color experience when we subvert prescribed paradigms. It shows the decolonization process one goes through. My Grandmother's *testimonio* and my *testimonio* will demonstrate the physical and emotional realities we lived in our countries, and how we let the White traveler believe we stayed indoors, and were quiet. Our emancipation movement was only beginning when Humphrey discovered us in 1997. In addition, we accepted his description of us as barbaric, filthy, and lacking in intelligence because it was compensated for by also describing us as welcoming, and good people (Stillwell Cole, 1893). With this research, I am done asking permission; therefore, if you stay, it is on my terms.

Statement of the Research Problem

In addition to the frequent misinterpretation of the rural Honduras travelers passed by, there is an agreement among scholars that, historically, Western and Third world feminists have disagreed about what makes a feminist and the literature demonstrates that their movements are generated and influenced by differing contexts. Herr (2014) agrees that the initial struggle of Western feminism focused on women's gender equality while the struggle of Third world focused on collective equality. This difference has created conflicts in the movement.

I propose that often the literature focuses on that activism at the macro-level, but does not explore rural movements that offer a micro-level insight of the agitation itself. I became interested in using my Grandmother's narrative in this research after years of searching for a study that would speak to my development as feminist woman. However, pursuing new territory created roadblocks during the process, as well as new opportunities for scholarly contribution.

In terms of studying feminism in rural Honduras, the current literature lacks information that offers a micro-level view of the situation of the rural woman. Additionally, the literature I found was usually written by Western scholars about women from rural Honduras, whose voices in some cases were hardly included. In order for me to be able to conduct this study, I had to use a methodology that fit the cultural context of the country, as well as a theoretical framework that would open spaces for rural narratives.

It is important to note that during the exploratory stage there were three emergent themes: Christianity, education, and women's reproductive rights. These themes were not new in Central American discourse; in fact, social activists Rigoberta Menchú, Elvia Alvarado, and María Teresa Tula also identified them in their testimonial books (Alvarado, 1987; Menchú, 1983; Tula, 1995). Their own identification correlates with discussion of how the historical and cultural

context of the country influenced the development (or lack of development) of the Third World feminist woman. It is in this moment where during the literature exploration where questions arise about how a woman like *mi abuela* [my Grandmother] was able to overcome socio and cultural roadblocks in a country dominated by the rhetoric that dictated women were second-class citizens. *La mujer mala que no sirve* [the bad woman who is worthless], *las cuatro Marias: la india, la virgen, la madre y la puta* [the four Marys: the Indian, the virgin, the mother, and the whore].Those questions were also my misconceptions of rural feminism. My lack of understanding drove me to explore the topics more, and from there more questions emerged.

Significance of the Study

This study can provide researchers with new tools that will illuminate better ways to conduct inquiry in non-Western settings. The outcomes of this study will help place *testimonio* at the center of non-Western methodologies, as well as open spaces for voices that are not traditionally represented in the feminist narrative.

Research Questions

As a researcher, how could I complete a study where I had to first overcome my own personal struggle as a colonized woman? How could I have a true conversation with my Grandmother who differs generationally and ideologically from me? And lastly, how could I create a space for the next generation of Honduran researchers using non-Western methodologies? In order for me to be authentic, I had to accept the fact that my own decolonization was necessary. I did not know that I could find what I needed within my own experiences. During my whole life my Grandmother has been my source of wisdom, because "[her] shared knowledge of cultural concepts was a tool for survival" (Chixapkaid, 2011, p. 131).

Her wisdom had been provided to me via *testimonio*, but it was not until now that I was going to record it, and make it part of my voice.

Using *testimonio* as the methodology allowed me to be a subject of study, and create a space where my Grandmother could enter and be part of the conversation. At the beginning of my dissertation, I discussed the use of cleaning house and inviting the reader as a metaphor for initiating analysis using my own paradigm. I use *Testimonio* as the living room for our conversation, where the reader gets to hear both my and my Grandmother's voices.

In this study I propose that my Grandmother's catracha*ness* are her physical realities, the social and biological concepts that provided her with the tools for social transformation, emancipation, and critical consciousness. Furthermore, her physical realities—what Moraga (1983) calls "the flesh"—unconsciously became my realities during my childhood, and younger years. In addition, her participation in different social and cultural contexts, created a politic born out necessity, making me a *mujer liberada*. With this study I plan to address the following research questions:

1. How did my Grandmother influence my feminist views?
2. Does my Grandmother consider herself a feminist woman?
3. How does the concept of Mestiza consciousness fit in the narrative of a rural feminist woman?

However, before I move to answer these questions, I plan to first define the terminology I used in this study so the reader is able to understand the language. Next, I discuss the difference between Third World feminism and First World feminism. The, n I expand Third World feminism, but focus specifically on rural feminism in Honduras, and last, I re-braid the rural feminist term to open the space for my Grandmother's narrative.

Definition of and Discussion of Terms

In order to be true to my voice, I chose to incorporate some Spanish words. I have provided the English translations next to them, so the reader is able to comprehend the meanings. Additionally, in order to maintain a common understanding of the terminology, I provide a definition for some of the terms used in this study:

Campesinos [peasants]— Menchú (1983) uses the word *campesinos* to describe the indigenous people who work in the coffee plantations in the mountains in Guatemala. Alvarado (1987) uses the same term to describe the mestizo people who worked cultivating in the rural areas of Honduras. Just because a *campesino* lives in the rural area, does not imply land ownership. The main social movement of the *campesinos* in Honduras has been to obtain land so they can practice subsistence agriculture. My Grandmother T. was born in a rural area, and her mother was a *campesina*. After my Grandmother married my Grandfather they also practiced subsistence farming.

Catracha—Nickname use to describe a Honduran women. The name evolved from Florencio and Pedro Xatruch, who were two brothers who fought William Walker's occupation in the late 1800s. The name evolved from Xatruch to Xatrucho/a to Catracho/a. *Una mujer catracha* [a catracha woman] signifies a brave woman who is faithful to her country.

Conscientización [Conscientization]— "to make aware, awakening of consciousness or critical consciousness . . . a social process, taking place among men as they unite in common reflection and action" (Lloyd, 1972, p. 5). *Conscientização* (in Portuguese) is the deepening of the attitude of awareness characteristic of all emergence" (Freire, 1970, p. 109). In Spanish the term for consciousness is *conciencia*, which Anzaldúa (2007) describes as the transformation of the Mestiza woman from the small "I" to the total

"Self." In Honduran Spanish *conciencia* is a trait that not everyone can acquires; the term is connected with *conocimiento* [knowledge]—for example an individual who has *conciencia* has acquired *conocimiento* [knowledge]. It can also imply knowledge of what is right and what is wrong, or a conscience.

Educada/o—the literal translation in English is "to be educated," however being *educada/o* in Honduras does not have anything to do with the level of education. The term is related to a personality trait of humility, and conforming to social norms. *Ella es bien educada* [she is very educated] means that your parents raised you well.

Ladinos—Individuals of mixed Spanish and indigenous blood (Acker, 1988). The terms is commonly used to describe Mestizos. Menchú (1987) uses this term in her book to describe Guatemalan people who are not indigenous.

Liberada—A liberated woman who does not uphold cultural norms. It can have a negative connotation in some societal groups.

Machismo—A concept prevalent in the Honduran culture were men display "manly" attitudes, contrary to the virtues and morality women should embody.

Marianismo—A concept prevalent in the Honduran culture where women hold the virtues and morality of the Virgin Mary.

La Mestiza—Anzaldúa (2007) defines *La Mestiza* as the constant state of transition. In the local language it is the racial and ethnic mix of Spanish and Indigenous blood. In Honduras the predominant racial group is Mestizos. During colonial days, *Mestizos* were third in line in terms of privilege in the Latin American countries: first, were the Spaniards born in Spain, second, the *criollos* [Creoles] who were the Spaniards born in the America to immigrant Spaniards, and third, were *Mestizos* (Kattán-Ibarra, 1995). Today, Mestizos continues to be the predominant ethnic group in Honduras.

Mestiza Consciousness—Anzaldúa (2007) defines it as a third element that is part of "self," that moves constantly. Painfully breaks down the subject−object duality (Pérez, 2005).

Partido Liberal—One of Honduras' main political parties also known as "Liberals." It was founded in 1891. They reject the two-class society and Hispanic values. They promote internal economic growth, immigration, and investment (Acker, 1988). However, in the last three decades they have not differed from the *Partido Nacional*.

Partido Nacional— One of Honduras' main political parties, also known as a "Conservative" party. It was founded in 1891. They focus on maintaining a traditional two-class society (peasants and aristocrats) with a paradox of offering peasants the right of communal lands beside a landholding elite (Acker, 1988). Once again, in the last three decades, they do not maintain different values from their main opponent, the *Partido Liberal.*

Social-emancipatory Theory–centered on the potential humans possess for emancipation and creativity in the middle of cultural and economic oppression. It is entwined with personal empowerment, social transformation, and conscientization (La Belle, 1987; Lloyd, 1972).

Subaltern– The "Otherness," or the "popular" who emerges from an oppressive environment, and is caught in the web of hegemonic power. Their resistance to the elite politics, culture and history emerges from the newfound consciousness (Arias, 2001; Mignolo, 2005).

Testimonios [Testimony]–"The word *testimonio* in Spanish carries the connotation of an act of truth telling in a religious or legal sense" (Beverly, 2004, p. 3). In the evangelical church, *testimonios* are also used to give testimony to a life-changing moment as a new convert. This telling happens in the first person by the main protagonist or witness (Reyes and Rodríguez, 2012). Outside the literature, *testimonio* is widely use in law and Christianity. *Dar testimonio* [to give testimony] is to be a witness to an event or spiritual experience.

Third World Feminism– Herr (2014) separates it as a way for Third World women to analyze oppression and resistance at their local and national levels. In the literature review there is contestation over the definition of Third World Feminism. Mohanty (2003) explains that if the definition of feminism itself has been controversial, and Third World Feminism's definition is more complicated.

CHAPTER TWO: FOUNDATIONS OF FEMINISM

Introduction

At the beginning of this study I spoke about Western and Third World feminism in general terms. I decided to limit use of this term because I did not want to distract the reader with a concept that I will not be using in this study. I use the following chapter to write a rationale for my decision.

Feminist Movement in Honduras

In addition to the socioeconomic disadvantages, Honduran women have endured a tradition of male *machismo* that disparages female value inside and outside their homes. Such discrimination has both economic and social roots (Acker, 1988). Education, the right to vote, and citizenship were male rights. It is hard to believe that that among all the disenfranchisement Honduran women have been experiencing for decades, they still found a way to become agents of change.

Historically, the progress of feminist movements in Third World countries varied between northern and southern neighbors—while women in the US gained their right to vote in the early 1900s, in Latin America, women did not achieve the same voice until 60 years later (Shayne, 2004). Latin American movements were clandestine and connected to political revolution in their homelands. They began in kitchens, organized by the middle and lower class mothers of the disappeared (Stephen, 1995). In Honduras in particular, women's agitation started in 1924 with the Women's Cultural Society, but the "feminist perspective" did not emerge until the 1980s (McKelvey, 1999; Merrill, 1993). Women have been fighting for consciousness and collective emancipation all along. Mejia (1994) adds that around the same decade, the Women's Liberation Committee Visitación Padilla became one of the strongest

grassroots movements in the country. It was organized by Visitación Padilla (whose movement was name after), and Graciela García, who were major figures in the country's feminist movement (Merrill, 1993). There is not much information regarding Graciela García, but Mejia (1994) describes Visitación Padilla as "a symbol for Honduran women. . . . She was against the interventionist policies of the US and was a committed anti-imperialist. She also fought against the military dictatorship of her time and against women's oppression" (p.33). Both women's social activism paid off, and women in Honduras obtained the right to suffrage in 1954 (Acker, 1988), moving them to go one step forward towards equality.

In the rural areas feminism looked different as the rural movement was related to the right to land, and the Catholic Church supported these grass-roots movements (Norsworthy & Barry, 1994). Sterbach (1991) adds that Latin American movements were about breaking silence, collective action, and moving forward to a better future (as cited in Abbassi and Lutjens, 2002). The Latin American resistance has always been aligned with social and human-rights movements that do not often demand gender equality– instead, they demand gradual political and economic changes (Herr, 2014). It is imperative to note that even though women in the movement were fighting alongside men, and in some cases harder than men, women were still objects of discrimination by their male *compañeros* [male partners] (Alvarado, 1987).

The rural feminists left gender equality as a priority for other movements and distinguished other important problems to address like malnutrition, parasites, unemployment, education, health, proper housing and infrastructure (Acker, 1988). The rural movement struggled to recruit all the women to participate in the cause, but due to the poverty in their communities, rural women also defected, and two types of women emerged: the *campesina* who

worked the land alongside other *campesinos*, and the *campesinas* who migrated to the city to find work.

The ones who stayed to work the land began to get organized in the late 70s, and founded associations like the *Federacion Hondureña de Mujeres Campesinas* [Honduran Federation of Peasant Women] (FEHMUC) (Acker, 1988). The women who migrated to the city were pushed to do so because of high unemployment and the lack of land. They migrated to the big cities like Tegucigalpa and San Pedro Sula in order to find better employment opportunities. They worked to alleviate the poverty in their communities by sending money back home. However, their migration did not elevate them economically, to the contrary, it forced them to be used for cheap labor (Norsworthy & Barry, 1994). They either worked as *sirvientas* [servants], or street vendors (Merrill, 1993). Menchú's (1984) experience as a servant describes the oppressive conditions rural women suffered when they moved to the city: "the mistress used to watch me all the time and was very nasty to me. She treated me like . . . I don't know . . . not like a dog because she treated the dog well" (p. 94). Her account is indicative of the inhumane experiences rural women suffered. As a consequence of the degrading environment, many went back to their communities to get organized and continue to fight for collective equality, hoping that someday they would obtain gender equality.

When Third Intersects First

From the 1950s to the 1980s, Latin America grew economically, and this growth was reflected in women's higher participation in the labor force, as well as the feminist movement shifting to anti-imperialism attitudes that included objections to the country's economic inflation (Safa, 1995, as cited in Abbassi and Lutjens, 2002; McKelvey, 1999). This fluctuation focus demonstrated the changing characteristics of the Latin American activism and how other factions

were embedded within the crusade. Third World women believed in the urgency to first achieve national self -determination and later overcome gender discrimination (Herr, 2014). The anti-imperialistic sentiment demonstrated the demographic changes in the country. Honduras was experiencing an influx of missionaries from the United States, many of whom settled in the big cities like Tegucigalpa to use them as the main hubs for indoctrination. My grandparents were affected directly by this shift. They were employed by missionaries in the capital city, so they sold everything they had and migrated to Tegucigalpa. I share part of their journey here.

A *Campesina* Migrates to the City

> *The opportunity to work for the missionaries arrived when my grandparents were young. The pastor where my grandparents attended church in Catacámas informed them of a job opportunity with the missionaries in Tegucigalpa—they were looking for a groundskeeper and a cook. The missionaries were looking for a couple with a small family who could work long hours without children to be inconvenient. My grandparent's family size was perfect; it was rare for a rural familia campesina [campesina family] to have only one child.*
>
> *Moving from Catacámas to Tegucigalpa was the fourth time my Grandmother had migrated to another town; most rural women at that time grew up, married, separated, aged, and died in the same town they were born. By now, my Grandmother had experienced life in four towns. She was born, raised, and married in Mercedes de Oriente, separated from my Grandfather in the mountains of Olancho, moved to Rio Tinto after getting back with my Grandfather, and moved to Catacámas to work. So, relocating moving to*

Tegucigalpa was not a big deal for her. My Grandmother saw it as an opportunity to improve their lives and give my mother the opportunities she did not have.

The first time my Grandmother met a white woman was when she moved to Tegucigalpa to work for Miss Frances Beard. My Grandfather was employed as the groundskeeper, and my Grandmother as a cook. They lived in a house that was provided by the mission, and the missionaries required them to be available to work at all times. However, just because they lived in the mission it did not mean that they had the same resources the missionaries did. For example, my mother attended the local school outside the mission, and the sons and daughters of the missionaries attended their own school, juntos pero no revueltos [together but segregated].

Miss Frances (as they called her) was the missionary who directed el Instituto Biblico [Bible Institute] in the Honduran capital, and was my grandparents' direct boss. I always sensed that both my Grandfather and Grandmother saw Miss Frances as a mother figure, a perception that was corroborated during a conversation with my Grandmother. I never criticized their perception towards Miss Frances because I knew the background of both their childhood. My Grandmother's relationship with her single mother was of a daughter who is there to help the family survive acute poverty. My Grandfather never had a relationship with his mother because she died in childbirth when he was five years old, so he grew up alone with an alcoholic father. In turn, Miss Frances became the mother figure they never had. For that I respected to a certain point their perspective on their relationship with her.

The first time my Grandmother understood Miss Frances' authority was the time my Grandfather got scolded by her. My Grandmother narrates this incident as follows:

Tú papá estaba disgustado conmigo porque una de las mujeres del bíblico le había chismeado algo sobre mí. Él me estaba regañando y gritando. Y en lo que me estaba gritando iba pasando Miss Frances, y ella escuchó a tu papá. Ella entro a la casa y lo llamo que fueran afuera a platicar. Ella lo regaño y le dijo que así no se le hablaba a su esposa. Tu papá bien apenado, nunca volvía gritarme en frente de ella.

According to my Grandmother, my Grandfather was upset about something he believed she had done wrong, they were arguing in their home, and he was yelling at her for it. In that precise moment, Miss Frances was walking by their house, and heard my Grandfather yelling. She stopped to see them, and called my Grandfather outside the house for a chat. My Grandfather recalls the same event and he remembers being scolded by Miss Frances for yelling at my Grandmother. My Grandfather did not say a word in protest to Miss Frances' intervention in their marital affairs; to the contrary, he apologized to Miss Frances for his behavior, but did not apologize to my Grandmother (T. Zavala, December 10, 2015).

Reflection and Analysis.

There are many ways to deconstruct my Grandmother's experience, but for now, I would like to only discuss it from her perspective. My Grandmother told me this to describe how much of a feminist woman Miss Frances was—how she was able to stand up to my Grandfather, and

call him out when he was wrong. She admired Miss Frances' courage and strong will against a man, especially considering she was a single woman and White. I went a step further, and saw it as the common practice of patronization by Western feminist women, which is a common feeling among feminist women from Third World countries. Some Western feminists practiced "moral imperialism"; therefore, Third World feminist have felt patronized, and continuously criticized for their cultural practices, and also for not aspiring to the same things Western feminists aspire to (Kimball, 2012). My Grandmothers' experience demonstrates an example of patronization by a feminist woman from the Western world, which also extended to the intrusion into a cultural custom; therefore, Miss Frances was exercising moral imperialism.

Yet, going back to the discussion of labels, my Grandmother has never positioned herself as a Third World feminist woman. She has labeled herself as community leader, gatekeeper, and *luchadora* [fighter]. These labels speak contrary to the type of definitions I was using at the beginning of this study. They do not match the translations my Grandmother was using in our conversations, which was problematic for this study. The lack of clarity in the labels kept affecting the progress of our conversations because I was speaking in a language that was not mine—I was speaking the colonized language. Harjo (2011) explains, "the theory behind these practices is that the way to break the spirit of peoples is to take away their symbols of freedom, independence, personhood, and nationhood, and to berate them, call them names, and denigrate all they respect until they adopt the pejoratives as their own attributes" (p. 31). Consequently, in order for me to continue a fluid conversation with my Grandmother, I had to accept that my own language had been colonized and that I was not speaking the dialect of my ancestors anymore, I was speaking the language of the oppressor. I will expand this discussion in the next sections because it relates to my writing development in this dissertation as my own form of liberation.

Nevertheless, I would like to emphasize that Western feminist movements and Third World feminist movements have intersected one way or another since their emergent periods, but, their different cultural, sociological, geographical and political contexts made them diverge from one another and one example was my Grandmother's relationship with Miss Frances.

Mohanty writes that since the 1970s, Western feminist theory that has moved to answer questions of power, struggle and social transformation, while shifting toward a more progressive movement, and claims that, in part, this idea of all women aspiring to the same things came from the Western feminist idea of females as a category of analysis that identifies them as a homogeneous group (2003). Western feminist movements' concentration is first laid on the social, religious, and political rights solely of women (Treanor, 2002). This category of analysis is what was affecting my narrative because even in the short time I was conducting this study, I quickly found roadblocks within the Honduran feminist definition, due to divergence within the movement.

A *Catracha* Issue

In an earlier discussion, I explained how the concept of feminism in Honduras is a collective effort, and is embedded in the cultural context that many times is not even used as part of the rhetoric in the movement. When I was studying for my bachelor's degree, I traveled to Honduras to conduct research on the status of women in rural areas. My Grandmother was very interested in what I was doing and she was, in a sense, aware of what the project was about. During that trip, I remember asking her for the first time if she considered herself to be a feminist woman. She paused for a minute and then answered me with a question: *¿Qué es una mujer feminista?* [What is a feminist woman?]. I gave her a general definition of what a feminist woman was; however, I now know that the definition I gave her was based on a Western

perspective, not on a Honduran perspective. She then made the comment— *Ah, entonces estás hablando de una mujer liberada como Miss Frances* [oh, so then you are talking about an emancipated woman like Miss Frances]. Her answer generated two layers for this discussion: first, an exploration of the Honduran definition of feminism, and second, how my Grandmother's perception of who fit the feminist definition.

To clarify my Grandmother's perception, it is imperative that I explain the concept of *Catrachaness* as the model for feminism in rural Honduras.

The Concept of Catracha*ness*

The concept of Catracha*ness* has not been developed or spoken of in any literature. I use Catracha*ness* in this study is my way of describing my *trenza de identidades multiples* [braid of multiple identities]. The initial idea occurred as a result of reading an article by Francisca E. Gonzalez (2010) about the formation of Mexica*ness* in Mexican women. I was intrigued by the concept because it really spoke of the essence and identity of a Mexican woman. While reading the article, I wondered what I would see if I deconstructed the identity of a Honduran woman. The first thought that came to mind was the ultimate nickname for Honduran women: *Catrachas*. The history or evolution of the nickname seemed appropriate to the evolution of this research, and to the development of my own rhetoric.

Hondurans gain the nickname *Catrachas/os* from two Honduran Generals named Florencio and Pedro Xatruch. The Xatruch's brothers fought against the occupation of William Walker in Honduras from 1856 to 1857. In a time of thirst for national identity, Hondurans saw the last name Xatruch as a symbol of subversion against imperialism, but most of all, as a symbol of *valentia*, and *patriotismo* [bravery, and patriotism]. Consequently, in the Central American narrative, the last name Xatruch evolved from *Xatruch* to *Catruch* to *Catracho/a.*

Gonzalez (2010) describes Mexica*ness* as the subversive narrative of one's own reality, and it is the innate experience of Mexican women. So while I align her descriptions to mine, I also see Catracha*ness* implying a subversive narrative of my own reality, and my innate experience as a Honduran woman who subverted Western domination and colonization. Subsequently, the intersection of my reality, my experiences, and my subversion is what created my identity, which is my Catracha*ness*.

Re/braiding the Feminist Definition for this Study

So, how do I connect this newfound narrative to my study? If Catracha*ness* implies the subversive narrative of one's own reality, I also have to deconstruct the meaning of *feminismo* [feminism] framed in Honduran context. As I previously shared, my Grandmother's definition and understanding described the term framed in a rural context by the narrative of a rural woman. Her understanding described an independent Western woman who did not abide patriarchal domination, yet who maintained other cultural and religious customs. My Grandmother had seen Miss Frances order my Grandfather around, and my Grandfather following her orders, so for my Grandmother, Miss Frances represented a Western feminist woman.

The previous context became an initial trigger to continue exploring the possibility that the concept of *mujer feminista* [feminist woman] that my Grandmother was describing was not a common term for the Honduran woman in Honduras, but it was connected to Western feminism. In further conversations, my Grandmother also identified Miss Frances as *liberada.* Her definition allowed me to see that my Grandmother interchangeably used *feminista* and *mujer liberada* when speaking about Miss Frances.

I will attempt to go a bit further and state that because my Grandmother's interchangeable use, I decided that the term *mujeres liberadas* was more appropriate when speaking of feminist women in Honduras. I could continue to use a prescribed Western label of "Third World," however, this label denotes deficiency, victimization, and does not represent the *catracha*'s voice. I believe that re-braiding the concept of Honduran feminism helped me deconstruct and reconstruct the concept from a colonized stage to an emancipated stage. Hurtado (2010) explains that writing is a process that helps "feminists of Color … whether consciously or unconsciously, claim an existentialist position of deconstructing and constructing. To claim victimhood would inadvertently reinforce the hegemonic belief in people of Color's inferiority and inability to assert agency" (p. 218). So, in this study—I stated my agency by using interchangeably *catracha liberada, and mujer liberada* [emancipated *catracha* and liberated woman] when describing the feminist Honduran woman.

Tying the *Trenza*

Once I re/braided the feminist definition for a Honduran woman, I liberated myself from the prescribed Western feminist definition, and created more space for our narratives. In order for me to maintain this holistic framework, I needed to recognize and put the acquire agency into practice. Consequently, it was essential to create a research agenda that represented the *mujer liberada* from Honduras and her Catracha*ness*.

The use of *trenza* [braid] as a symbol for deconstruction of the feminist definition aligns with the inclusive approach of the Honduran context in this study. I am using *trenza* as a symbol of constructing and deconstructing my Catracha*ness*, a holistic concept of my experiences as a Honduran woman that were formed by the sociocultural context; secondly, I use it to form my

identity, which is a hybrid symbol tied together at the end with the politic born out of me, the *mujer liberada* (formally known as Third World feminist).

Breakdown of Dissertation Chapters

In the next chapters I intend to address the dissertation questions, organized into seven sections. Chapter One was the introduction to my narrative where I began by using the Honduran trait of welcoming the reader to enter my Grandmother's and my journeys. In Chapter Two, I laid out a *mujer liberada* agenda, which is based on a non-Western paradigm. There, I opened the space for my Grandmother to enter the conversation, and used the symbol of a *trenza* as my way to construct (braid), and deconstruct (unbraid) narratives.

Chapter Three provides the literature review on the socio-historical context of the country, where I discuss the three themes of education, women's reproductive rights and Christianity that are salient to the understanding of this study. With regards to these topics, I focus on them by using literature from the 1980s. Honduras has always been at a mid-point in regards to scholarly interest (between Mexico and Panama). I found that the literature written about the country lined up with U.S. involvement in our affairs. For example, there was a lot of information about the banana era, and the Contras-Sandinista war, but not much giving context to micro-level movements, and that indicates how my work will fill the gap in the research.

In Chapter Four, I discuss the theoretical frameworks for this study. I dive into Theory in the Flesh, Social Emancipatory Theory, and Mestiza Consciousness where I explain how each of these theories are connected to this study.

In Chapter Five I present the methodology for this study. I discuss the use of *testimonio* as a method of inquiry and product that fits with the study's objectives. Additionally, I discuss the data collection process where I detail the steps I took and my analysis.

Chapter Six presents the collection of three of my Grandmother's *testimonios*, each one representing the selected themes of education, religion and women's reproductive rights. At the end of each *testimonio* I share reflection and analysis.

Chapter Seven concludes this study with a discussion of the themes found in the *testimonios*, and answers to the questions pertaining to this study. In addition, I deliberate on the implication of the theory. I then conclude with directions for further study, and a conclusion where I use the metaphor of tying the *trenza* to finalize the narrative.

CHAPTER THREE: LITERATURE REVIEW

Introduction

Esta soy yo palabras y todo [This is who I am words and all]

–Professor Graham Smith–

As I mentioned earlier, during the process of orienteering and examining my Grandmother's and my journey in the Latin American context, three salient themes emerged: (1) education, (2) Christianity, (3) and women's reproductive rights. Each theme is rooted in the Latin American historical and cultural context of literacy, religion, and women's social activism.

I believe that in order for the reader to understand the context of our journeys, it is essential to learn about the place that witnessed it all. This section will provide a context for the community and the country where I grew up. I will describe the role of the themes in my youth in Honduras. This section will offer the reader a window into the past of my community and my country.

Historical Context of La Guama

La Guama is located two hours south from the Caribbean Sea. Even though the sea was not that far, and we were surrounded by this beautiful nature, we were not able to enjoy it because of the angle of our poverty. The village was founded as a consequence of a new corridor built early in the 1940s with the purpose of avoiding the use of the lake as a mode of transportation, and establishing access to the other side by car (E. Zavala, personal communication, September 21, 2015). This new road system, called the Pan-American Highway, was developed in the last quarter of the 1940s after the Second World War (Williams, 1957; Acker, 1988). The Pan-American Highway (a two-lane dirt road) in La Guama gave access to newcomers who settled inland or along the road; consequently, between 1945 and 1950, the

village began to grow (E. Zavala, personal communication, September 21, 2015). Among those newcomers were Salvadorian nationals who were looking for arable land to practice subsistence agriculture. Honduras had experienced a rapid influx of around 300,000 people from El Salvador, which later contributed to conflicts between both countries (L.T.G., 1971).

During the famous 1969 Honduran−El Salvador "Soccer War," La Guama experienced a population shift and Salvadorians were leaving the country due to cultural repression and land disputes, while Hondurans were moving into the city to stay in the community (E. Zavala, personal communication, September 21, 2015; L.T.G. 1971). The exodus of Salvadorian people allowed individuals like my Grandfather to buy land from Salvadorians who wanted to leave the country as fast as they could before they were victims of retaliation from the Honduran government. I always knew how the land was acquired; my Grandfather told me that the son of a Salvadorian man who lived in La Guama was studying at *El Instituto Biblico de la Misión Evangelica de Santidad* [World Mission's Bible Institute] in Tegucigalpa, which was the mission where my grandparents were working. The son of the Salvadorian man asked my Grandfather if he wanted to buy land in Lake Yojoa because his father was fleeing the country. My Grandfather agreed, and over four years he made payments for a piece of land that later became their permanent home (E. Zavala, personal communication, September, 21, 2015).

This is a small account of how my family ended up in La Guama, and there are more details to share, but I will let my Grandmother share them during her *testimonios.* However, it is important to point out that the community was not founded with an urbanization plan in mind, nor did a city commission plan its infrastructure. The village was created by people's hopes and socio-economic opportunities. Since its founding years, the layout of the village showed dreams through unfinished houses, as well as progress throughout their mismatched layout. Even today,

the village continues to be divided by the Pan-American Highway that comes from Guatemala and goes to Nicaragua. It is no longer a dirt road; it is a paved highway that continues to carry the dreams of its adjacent habitants.

Figure 2. Picture of La Guama with the Pan-American Highway going north. I took this picture sitting on my grandparents' land. The highway divides the lake from the highlands on the right side of the highway.

Figure 3. Picture of Lake Yojoa. I took this picture sitting on my grandparents' land, and it indicates the distance from my grandparents' property to the water.

Figures 2 and 3 show that on one side of the highway there are highlands (right side), and on the other side the beautiful *Lago de Yojoa* [Lake Yojoa] (see *Figure 3*)—as Williams (1957) described it "perhaps the most beautiful one in Central America" (p. 250). Our house was built in the highlands' side, but it was built so low that we never had a view of the lake, unless we climbed up the big hill behind our house. This was similar to everything that happened in our town: in order to accomplish something, we had to work hard to get it, but even working hard, it did not assure us of success. It always seemed that success was right there, but difficult to acquire.

The community's easy access to the highway made it a desirable place to live; however, nobody owned a car, and transportation was not reliable; therefore, people who migrated to the community were trapped, and unable to leave. The lack of opportunity created a community with acute socio-economic problems. The highway was so close to the houses that it was teasing us, inviting us to leave, but we could not. At the same time, the ones who could leave left forever and never looked back, nor did they remember us. The newcomers who came after the "Soccer

War" was over had to build along the road, so close to the highway that the shack would move every time a car drove by. This migration created a new physical and social division in the community: *los de arriba* [the ones from uptown], *los de abajo* [the ones from downtown], and *los del desvio* [the ones from the intersection]. *Los de arriba* [the ones from uptown] were the ones who lived south of the village, up in the hills, some with a view to the lake, and with enough land to practice agriculture or build more infrastructure. *Los de abajo* [the ones from downtown] were the ones who came second, and they were able to build along the road, north and south of town without much access to land. *Los del desvio* [the ones from the intersection] lived north of town, they were new families who also lived along the road, but who saw the business potential of our little town, and became the merchants.

I attended and graduated from the local elementary school with a class of fifteen (see *Figure 4* Appendix A). My classmates were from all the areas of the community, making our school the central location where all our stories met and departed. I lived in La Guama for fifteen years, but it continued to be my permanent address even when I left to study in another town.

I share this insight into the community where I grew up, and my educational experience as an elementary student, because it gives the reader a context for the conditions of the community, and the social position of my family. However, it is important to share the state of the country at that time, because it gives a broader insight into the status of the nation as a whole, as well as some of the reasons why my community was a forgotten.

Historical Context of Honduras

Education.

The educational landscape demonstrates the slow pace of opportunities for women. Under Spanish rule, education for women was only for domestic purposes, or related to service

to the Catholic Church. Where their faithfulness sanctified the unfaithfulness of their men, women were instructed to serve, and to maintain silence and chastity (Villar, 2001). Even thought my great Grandmother was Catholic, the church she attended did not offer opportunities for her and her children, so my Grandmother did not experience that type of informal education.

> As an example of how behind Honduras was in the development of their educational system, note that it was not until 1787 that Honduras began its first college, more than 100 years after Guatemala (our neighboring country) opened its first one (Acker, 1988). The country's public education was institutionalized after its independence from Spain in 1821, and the Catholic Church's control was eliminated (De Quesada, 1978). However, access to education continued to be a male right, and even though the most privileged women attended school, they were still marginalized (Villar, 2001).

Beginning in 1979, Honduras faced one of its worst economic and social situations, when the government's orientation changed drastically from progressive to conservative (Moncarz, 1984). I began elementary school in 1983 and finished sixth grade in 1989. The community where I lived was one of the poorest in the *Departamento de Cortés* [Cortés Department]. During the conservative era, the government neglected the educational system. In order to understand the ensuing crisis, it is necessary to discuss the statistics from that time:

- Three years before I entered elementary school, nationally, only 22% who graduated from elementary school continued to secondary school (Lapper, 1985). This meant that in my cohort, only two of us would be likely to continue to secondary school.
- By the time I was in third grade, at the national level, 56% of Hondurans continued to be illiterate (Acker, 1988).

- By the time I graduated from sixth grade, the Ministry of Education reported that there was 84% illiteracy in the rural areas, and in many cases instruction was only offered until the third grade (Norsworthy & Barry, 1994).

These statistics paralleled with what was going on socially and economically in the community, but also corresponded to the national problem of a lack of proper education in Honduras. In fact, of the thirteen students who graduated from primary education at the *Escuela Froylán Turcios*, I was the only one who continued to secondary school. The educational crisis was not only having outdated books, but it extended to old infrastructure, having only two teachers, and a lack of resources to help them deliver classes.

Additionally, the last statistic that reported 84% illiteracy in the rural areas, and third grade offered as the highest level of education, demonstrated a lack of progress since 1949, which was the year my Grandmother attended third grade forty years earlier. Clearly, raising the level of education was not a priority for the Honduran government, proven by the way officials managed the distribution of funds. The military was receiving a big portion; to be exact, $31.3.million in aid (Acker, 1988), from the U.S. support of the Contras. So, while the military was thriving, the educational system continued to decay to the point where education was once more an opportunity only for the rich and privileged. Alvarado (1987) responds to this crisis by stating "[w]e Hondurans are capable of doing anything, if we had the education. But instead of teaching Hondurans, the government brings in these foreign experts with their huge salaries. And we continue to be idiots" (p.104).

A step towards progress occurred in 1990 during the World Conference in Education, where the United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), the United Nations Development Programme

(UNDP), and the World Bank identified education as a human right and placed significance on developing basic instruction (Ashida & Sekiya, 2014). This call for international prioritization made an impact on how the Honduran government responded to improve the educational system, and as a consequence, the completion rates for citizens in primary education in Honduras increased to approximately 40% in 1997, and 69% by 2002 (Bedi & Marshall, 1999; Ashida & Sekiya, 2014). This increase was a success for the country because these data demonstrated nationwide growth, which also translated to growth in the rural areas. However, scholars voiced their concerns with the way the data was being collected and disclosed, stating that there was a disparity in the information, this growth hid other factors like high student repetition and desertion (Bedi & Marshall, 1999). The concern over these issues was true to what I was seeing happen in my school. Many children repeated grades, or simply stopped attending.

"Yami" Va a la Escuela: A Testimonio About Rural Education.

My name in Honduras is Yami; nobody knows me by Dina. Yami is the short name for my middle name Yamileth. The only ones who called me by my first name were my grandparents and people outside La Guama. Everyone else called me Yami.

One of the most beautiful memories I have of growing up in La Guama is attending la *escuela primaria* [elementary school] Froylán Turcios. *La escuela* [the school] Froylán Turcios was located between *arriba* [uptown] and el *desvio* [the intersection]. It was almost in the middle of town. The school property bordered *una finca de café* [a coffee farm] that belonged to the M family, and Don F (coincidently he had the same name of our school, so it took me a while to understand that the school was not named after him but is named instead for a famous Honduran writer). The building was tucked in a natural inland hill, which gave us a view of the lake, mountains, and parts of town. The school had two classrooms and one small, additional room,

originally built with the idea that someday it would be the principal's office, but it never became one. Instead, the principal, who was also my fourth grade teacher, used it to store broken furniture, old books, and old maps that were never repaired. There was no cafeteria, or playground equipment, so our entertainment consisted of climbing guava, mango and coco trees, or playing jump rope, hide and seek or tag. In the back of the school, there was a small backyard with one *letrina* [latrine] that many of us did not use because of the filthy condition it was in. There was a hole where we burned trash every day in the afternoon, and the hole was so big that it took up half of the already small space we had for recess. Sometimes we played in front of or behind of the school, but mostly in the back because the boys would take the front yard to play soccer so there was not room for us girls to play rope, tag, etc.

Our school was very poor, and there were no textbooks, or instructional materials for the teachers. The only textbooks we had were old story books that had been there since the beginning of time. I could read signatures of older kids, or doodles from someone who had been bored in class. The books had missing pages, so when we were reading them, we would make sure to pair with other classmates who had the pages we were missing. Sometimes we were lucky, and between three people, we would have a complete book. Every student was required to bring their own school supplies (notebook and pencil), but many classmates could not afford them, so the teachers would buy extras. At first, we had two teachers: Profe. R, and Profe N. Profe. R taught grades first to third, and Profe. N, fourth to sixth grade. We did not like Profe. N much because she was also the principal. We knew if we misbehaved, most likely, she would be the one who was going to punish us. We knew that Profe N was a no-nonsense teacher.

The school day was divided in two. In the morning, school started at 8:00am and ended at 12:00pm. We would go home to eat lunch and return for the second half of the day. In the

afternoon school started at 2:00pm and the day ended by 4:00pm. Every afternoon, a group of kids from each class was required to clean their room for that day. Spanish, math, science, social studies, home economics and gardening classes were also divided during the day. We had physical education on Saturdays, as well as *Sábado Cívico* [Cultural Saturday]. On Saturdays, after I became a fourth grader, I helped my teacher to organize the activities for phy- ed and *Sábado Cívico*. These two opportunities were a springboard for my love of teaching. Whether the instructors let me do it because they were lacking resources, or because I was really good at it, for me was the opportunity of a lifetime.

The poverty in La Guama was so acute that parents did not have a problem making a choice between school supplies or food, nor did the teachers question it. Also, children were required to help with work when the opportunity arose, and during coffee season many of my classmates were gone working with their families picking coffee at the different coffee farms, or selling fish in *el desvio*. Many times teachers would be missing so many students that they would just cancel classes. Between November and December it was an important time during the year because families had the opportunity to make extra money in the coffee farms, so they worked longer hours so they could save enough money for *una Buena tamaleada y estrenos* [a good tamal season] and new clothes for *navidad* [Christmas].

Our family was also seasonal farmers: my Grandfather farmed coffee, corn, beans, and sometimes rice. It was on a very small scale, but I remember he always hired people, so a few of the parents in the community would come and work for him. A few times, I would help picking coffee (yet I never missed school), but my main job was helping my great Grandmother and Grandmother delivering los *almuerzos* [the lunches] to whoever was working that day. Both my Grandmother and Grandfather would remind me that if I went to school, I did not need to work

the way they had been working their whole lives. So I always kept in mind the importance of education for my family, as well as the lack of opportunities without it.

At the end of each academic year, sixth grade students were faced with a national exam: they were required to sing the Honuran anthem and explain every verse. During my visit to Shirley, New York this past December, my family and I stopped to see my cousin and his wife N. N was my sixth grade classmate, and one of the kids who moved from the city to our town during the late 80s. She reminded me that during our national anthem exam, I was helping some students to pass it.

Norma: *Yami, ¿no te acordas vos que chepeaste durante el examen del himno?*

Yo: *¿Qué? noooo.*

Norma: *Si vos, vos llevaste un cartél para que S, O y Olban pasaran. Te fuiste atrás del salón. Y cuando la Profe les estaba preguntando la explicación vos ponías el cartel arriba para que los cipotes lo vieran.*

Yo: *No me acuerdo*

I questioned her more because I did not remember. She said that some of our classmates were struggling to memorize all the verses and the explanation, so I created a sign with parts of the test answers. When Profe. N began the examination, I went to the back of the school, and through the windows I showed them the answers. I still do not remember this incident, but I do remember my best friend S being worried that she was going to fail sixth grade. She was also worried that O, who was her brother, was going to fail for the third time. O was three years older than S, and he had been held back twice, so we caught up to him. I remember he was always embarrassed to be in the same grade as his sister. O struggled in class a lot: he was always missing class and also getting in trouble with the teachers. My relationship with him was very

different—he was very kind and treated me like a younger sister and protected me. So, I see N's recollection as something I would do for him and his sister. S was my best friend, and I had a soft spot for her brother. They both struggled academically, so we did homework together, and more than likely I knew there was no way they could memorize seven verses plus a 1400 word explanation.

S and O had a big family; their parents were older (the same age as my grandparents) and the difference was that their parents kept having children. They were also very poor, which aggravated S's situation. If the elementary school were not located in their backyard, I do not think they would have attended school.

This was the reality for many children in the community, so as a consequence, many parents found ways to organize and find ways to bring resources to the community. My Grandmother, who was always looking for ways to be involved in the community, knew that, but also knew that her leadership was important, and she became part of the *patronatos*—the organization that gave members of the area the opportunity to unite. My Grandmother was very involved, and with time, she became the president, and later continued as a member. Unfortunately, there is not much literature about this type of organization in Honduras. The literature I found discusses *patronatos* as community development committees. In many cases *el patronato de una comunidad* [the community development committee] was always linked, and continues to be linked, to the local school's *Sociedad de Padres de Familia* [Parent's Association]. In addition to providing a platform for parents to organize, it also served as the organization that created change in the community, from improving school infrastructure, to providing hot lunches at schools and organizing activities that would raise money for school

resources (United Nations, 1949). In other words, *el patronato* covered all the expenses the government did not cover.

The school infrastructure in our community was decaying every day, and each member of the *patronato* knew that it was going to be up to them to improve it. All six grades were divided in two classrooms: first to third grade in one classroom, and fourth to sixth grade in another. Under my Grandmother's leadership, *el patronato* fundraised enough in the community to buy materials, and when it was time to build it the classrooms, they also organized the volunteers to build the classroom. That is how things were getting done in La Guama. The *Patronatos* became social groups that promoted more immediate, small-scale change. The impact was more localized and more microscopic.

In the beginning of my elementary school education, I was already talking about continuing to *primer curso* [first year of middle school], and by 1990, my grandparents had been involved in building a new middle school in Peña Blanca, a town 30 minutes from La Guama. So by 1989, I knew that I was going to attend El Instituto Canada, a private middle and high school.

El Instituto Canada was founded out of necessity, and although it was private, it did not mean that rich kids attended. The rural areas continued to be forgotten by the Honduran government, so communities would band together and build their own schools. It was a very difficult task; students, parents and community members would work to raise money for the construction of classrooms. I remember going Sunday afternoons on the road to Peña Blanca and collecting money from passing cars. My Grandfather would get a rope and two people would hold each end across the road. When cars were coming we would raise it, so they could see it was *una colección* [a collection]. The truth was that no rope was going to stop a car—it was only symbolic. People from various communities saw the need to build a middle and high school, so

they came together to make it happen. That is how *El Instituto Canada* was founded. My grandparents were the ones who represented La Guama. The monthly tuition barely covered the teachers' salary, and on many occasions I remember my grandparents using their money to cover part of the expenses. My Grandmother's role during this time was more behind the lines. She was a stay-at-home wife who was taking care of everyone else, participating in the fundraising events; she was more involved as a parent in the elementary school.

My Grandmother was always the one who would be asked to organize something for school. Profe. N knew that if she asked her, things would get done. One year there was a lice outbreak in school. My Grandmother collected medicine and came to school with an army of mothers. I did not get my head cleaned because she had already done it at home, but I remember seeing the lines of kids in chairs with medicine on their heads, waiting to be combed and washed. All the kids got their heads cleaned that day, though the habit only lasted a few weeks.

My Grandmother came to school very often: she was deeply involved. She was also a volunteer of the *merienda* program [milk program] where children were given hot milk at mid-day. The older students were the ones who would get out of class early to prepare the *merienda* [snack] with a parent volunteer. Many times, I prepared it with my Grandmother. I do not remember the *merienda* program lasting too long. The government removed it very soon after a corruption scandal in the country.

The sixth grade cohort every one of the fifteen students from *La escuela Froylán Turcios* graduated in 1989 and although it was a happy time, I was also sad because I knew I was not going to see my classmates again. My grandparents were very strict with my social life. I only played with my neighbors who were my cousins. S and I knew that we were not going to be able to see each other again. I was going to go to middle school, and she was going to stay at her

parents', waiting for an opportunity to run away with a boy. So like I suspected, none of my classmates continued with middle school. If parents were not able to afford a notebook and pencil, there was no way they were going to be able to afford daily transportation, food, uniforms, and school supplies for their children. So all of them just stayed in the community. La Guama had only two options: for boys, to work subsistence farming or to fish in the lake, and for girls, to sell fish in the streets or run away with a boy. Soon every classmate took one of those roles: some became housewives, and others began selling fish in el *desvio* [the intersection], fishing or farming. I would see my former classmates here and there, but I had moved on to middle school, and my life was different now.

My grandparents also struggled economically, but they had promised to give me *una oportunidad de estudiar* [one opportunity to study]. They were very clear about there being one—they had given my mother *dos oportunidades* [two opportunities], and she had wasted them twice: first, she ran away at age sixteen with my biological father. The second time, she ran away with my stepfather J. So they were clear that they were not going to make the same mistake with me.

My classmates in el Instituto Canada came from similar backgrounds. They were the first in their families to continue middle school. There were a few whose parents may have finished high school, but it was very rare. I soon had a great group of friends. I met Al and Ai and we quickly became *las tres mosqueteras* [the three musketeers]. Al came from el Paraiso, a region in the south of Honduras, and Ai came from La Urupas, just north from La Guama. They both were at least five years older than me, (older for middle school). At *El Instituto Canada*, I became part of the Folklore Cultural Group, and also the volleyball captain. I traveled with my Grandfather to and from classes when he began teaching civics and also became the auditor for

the school. I loved spending days away from La Guama. I was meeting different people, and learning new things from diverse teachers. For the first time, I began learning English, something I had always wanted to do and exceled in. By eighth grade Profe. Fer gave me extra homework and every opportunity I had, I would also seek him outside the classroom, to practice my conversation. Everyone knew I loved English, so none of my classmates were surprised by my interest.

I loved Profe. Fer, he was a dynamic teacher, his classes were fun and he was knowledgeable of the outside world. I would sit and listen to him for hours, never getting bored. I was always intrigued because he did not fit the Honduran male profile. He was kind, open minded, and spoke a lot about equality. He was a defector from the Catholic Church, which made him more interesting. In the last year before being confirmed a Padre [Priest] from the Vatican, he renounced his vows. It was a shock for his family and friends, but it also continued to be a shock for everyone who got to know him. My family embraced him, and respected him. Our friendship continued even after I finished middle school. I became friends with his wife and children, and he became friends with my future husband.

All my middle school years were spent with my two friends Al and Ai. Al became more than a friend—she became like a sister to me. A year after she entered middle school, her sister, who was a teacher, was struggling economically and so was having trouble paying for Al's tuition and transportation. My grandparents offered for Al to come and live with us until she finished middle school, so she did for two years. Al and I also fought like sisters because she was very protective of me, and would get after me for any childish behavior I would exhibit. Even though I had my issues with Al, she became my ally, counselor and the sister I never had, all at the same time.

In our last year of middle school, I turned fifteen. It was a year of decisions. I needed to choose what I wanted to study. In Honduras, the educational system was very different from the one in the U.S.. Once a student finished *tercer curso* (9th grade equivalent), they could choose a career. My dream was always to learn English, so I had chosen *Secretaria Bilingüe* [Bilingual Secretary]. I knew it was the only way I could learn English. My Grandfather had a fit, and my Grandmother had to agree with him. He said that no daughter of his was going to be a mistress to any man. His rationale for such a comment was the fact that secretaries were known for being their bosses' mistresses. Unfortunately, that perception continues. I was furious! How dare he decide what I want to be? A teacher? Are you kidding me? *No me quiero morir de hambre* [I do not want to die of hunger] I told my Grandmother. I saw how the government never paid my mother, who was an elementary teacher, on time,. Also, it was such a bad salary system that on the days they got paid, teachers would be robbed. Other times, they had to wait months before they got paid. I was not interested in becoming one more *profesora hambrienta* [hungry teacher].

In the end, the decision was made for me: between my grandparents and mother, they decided that being a teacher would be my best fit. I did not have a say in the matter, so, they sent me to take the entrance exam at two Normal schools—one in Intibuca (La Escuela Normal de Occidente), and the other in El Paraiso (La Escuela Normal España). My Grandmother and mother wanted me to choose the one that was located in Intibuca because we had relatives in town. I remember vising those relatives, and I felt that living with them was going to be really hard. The lady (who was my Grandmother's relative) was a widow, so she dressed in black all the time. She was very religious, which meant I was going to go from *a casa Cristiana a otra casa Cristiana* [Christian house to another Christian house]. All way back home, my Grandmother told me how wonderful it was going to be living close to home, but all I did was

listen, and think of how I was going to tell my Grandmother that if I was accepted in the school farther away, I was going to go there.

Figure 4. Las Normalistas. This picture was taken in 1996. I am sitting in the bench, third from the left, in front of the school. This was my second year cohort. We are wearing formal blue uniforms that were required if we were doing a practicum in the local schools.

Women's Reproductive Rights

Women's reproductive rights has been one of the slowest movements in Latin America. The social inequality has been so acute that reproductive rights was not a movement that was even on the radar. Women's movement in Honduras has been focused on collective equality regarding land reform and basic human rights (Alvarado, 1987). Therefore, the idea of a movement focused only on one issue like fighting for reproductive rights has not correlated to the characteristic of a collective movement.

I intended to find information regarding family planning and the role of Community Based Distributors (CBD) in rural areas. However, the literature I found discuses family planning from a fertility-rate point of view, and there is limited information about the role of the CBD in rural areas (McNicoll, 1992; Bertrand, Pines, Santiso G. & Hearn, 1980). For this

reason, incorporating my Grandmother's voice about both experiences with family planning, and CBD was imperative as an addition to the literature.

The development of reproductive rights in Honduras has been different from the concept in the international arena where it has merged with sexual rights and emerged as:

- A component of general health,
- Making choice of partnerships,
- Controlling the number of children,
- Enjoying a satisfactory sexual life,
- Having access to and choice in family planning,
- Enjoying a healthy sexual life,
- Finding equality and equity, and
- Developing security (Torres & Sequeira, 2003).

These concepts were not part of Honduran rhetoric. Similar to the development of education, the development of women's reproductive rights was stagnant—the result of many social and cultural beliefs, which at the same time had economic consequences that affected an entire country. The first time the Honduran government took steps to address women's reproductive rights was in 1966, by establishing a family planning program. However, it only lasted nine years and then became the responsibility of *Centros de Salud Publicos* [Public Health Centers], and the private Family Planning Association (Guttmacher Institute, 1984). This shift took the country backwards, and women were the ones who suffered the most because it was up to the *Asociación Hondureña de Planificación Familiar* [Honduran Family Planning Association] (ASHONPLAFA), and *Centros de Salud* to provide contraceptives to women in the

rural areas [Public Health Centers]. The issue with both was the lack of infrastructure, and money that would facilitate the opening of public health and CBD centers.

Honduras was one of the countries with high fertility rates (McNicoll, 1992). Even though globally the total fertility rate (TFR) average was 4, the average in Honduras was 8.6 (McNicoll, 1992; Acker, 1988). Alvarado (1987) concurred, stating that *campesinas* did not use birth control, and they gave birth to a lot of children; she herself had six, which was not considered many. Alvarados's (1987) recount demonstrated the state of *campesina* women in Honduras during the 80s, and also validated the TRF average in the country. Large families also contributed to a high infant mortality rate (Norsworthy & Barry, 1994). As a child, I remember attending children's funerals very often—some were stillborn deaths, or others died at a very young age from malnutrition, which are both preventable deaths. At that time, my understanding of infant mortality went only as far as blaming our poverty, or justifying it as a fact of life: *la voluntad de Dios* [God's will]. I never realized that our situation went beyond myths.

The Family Planning Association (ASHONPLAFA) continued to research Latin America, so they could find solutions for the high fertility rate (FR) his part of the world was suffering from. Therefore, in order to address the relation of socioeconomic status and family planning's effect on contraceptive use in rural areas, there were various surveys conducted in the 80s. Two prominent surveys discussed in the literature are the World Fertility Survey (WFS), and the Contraceptive Prevalence Survey (CPS). Internationally, the WFS was first piloted in India, Turkey and Panama in 1977, and a year later, a CPS was conducted in El Salvador (Rodriguez, 1977, as cited in Cornelius & Novak, 1983; Janowits, Bailey, Ochoa, & Suazo, 1987). Both tools established the relationship between socioeconomic status and family panning with contraceptive use; furthermore, they examined the relationship of historical development

with the use of contraceptives in Third World countries. The first conclusion was not a surprise—it was obvious that a family who could not afford *arroz y frijoles* [rice and beans] was not going to spend their only *lempiras* [Honduran currency] on contraceptives.

The second conclusion of the CPS's survey was that the contraceptive use in Honduras remained low in comparison to other Central American countries. This showed more precise information about the state of Honduran women's reproductive health, namely: (1) data from the CPS survey conducted from 1981 to 1984 revealed that only 27% of women in the civil unions were using contraceptives (Guttmacher Institute, 1984), (2) women were using more traditional methods over modern methods (Hubacher, Suazo, Terrell, & Pinel, 1996), and (3) women did not use contraception because they feared disapproval from their husbands and the Church (Guttmacher Institute, 1984).

One way to explain the percentage of women using contraceptives, the types of contraceptives is by connecting them to their educational and economic status during that time. As I mentioned earlier, Honduras was suffering economically, worse than any Central American country. The first two conclusions could have been attributed to the economic crisis the country was facing as it fell behind from 1981 to 1984 (Moncarz, 1986), and families had to make choices about how to use the only income they had, and contraceptives were not the priority. I also noted that the illiteracy rate in rural areas was at 84% around that time, which could correlate with a high percentage of rural women falling in the 27% percent of the population not using birth control. The third conclusion substantiated a sociocultural characteristic that women did not control their reproductive rights. Instead their husbands, male partners and the church made the decisions about women's fertility. These survey results gave ASHONPLAFA enough

information to create methods based on socioeconomic and cultural context that would permit women's access to contraceptives.

Rural Women as Agents of Change.

The lack of contraceptive use during the 80s drove ASHONPLAFA to begin a marketing campaign that reached middle and lower class women from rural and urban areas (Bailey, Janowits, Solis, Machuca, & Suazo, 1989). However in order for it to be successful, they had to develop a strategy to overcome the economic and sociocultural influences of men's and the Church's authority over women's rights to their sexual health. "Honduran women have had to endure a tradition of male *machismo* that disparages their value inside and outside their homes" (Acker, 1988, p. 105). It is here where the intersection of *machismo* and *marianismo* continued to be revalent. Results from the CPS survey corroborated this intersection, where 9% of oral contraceptive non-users attributed their lack of use to the fear of husband/partner and/or church disproval (Guttmacher Institute, 1984).

The CBD approach was based on a holistic model that paralleled the country's needs and cultural context, created with the goal of serving underrepresented groups that lacked basic health services and who lived in isolated areas of a country. This concept had been used in the 1970s to provide female family planning and access to contraceptive information to women in Bangladesh (Abbott and Luke, 2011), including physical proximity, travel time, and economic savings, among other characteristics (Simba, Schuemer, Forrester & Hiza, 2011). In Latin America, the CBD approach emerged with the same goal: to offer the population who lived in the rural areas the option to purchase the same product they could in a clinic (Bertrand, Pines, Santisi G. & Molina, 1981).

The closest clinic to La Guama was located in Las Flores, a town thirty minutes by bus. Even though Las Flores was located only a half an hour from La Guama, there were not that many women who could afford the bus fare. Consequently, it was urgent to have a distributor in the area. La Guama was a perfect location because it was at the center of many communities, so it could fulfill the holistic purpose of community–based access.

From their home a Community–Based Distributor provides family planning products like oral contraceptives, condoms and other types of contraceptives (Bertrand, Pines, Santiso G. & Hearn, 1980). My Grandmother ran a small store out of her home, so she distributed the products right from there. Like all the distributors, she never got paid, but she earned a small percentage from the sale, and she participated in all the trainings provided by ASHONPLAFA. As I mentioned earlier, a CBD position was a very controversial role to have because there was social stigma and distrust on what the purpose of a CBD was. For that and many other reasons, ASHONPLAFA made sure to continue supporting the individuals who were running the distribution centers.

Las Pastillas no Son para Señoritas: A *Testimonio* About ASHONPLAFA

As a young schoolgirl, any discussions regarding sexuality included my mother, Grandmother and great-Grandmother. They were never sit-down exchanges, but they were *pláticas* while working in the kitchen, fetching wood, or running errands. In many intergenerational conversations that incorporated their different perspectives, they shared with me their experiences as young women. "Dating" meant for a boy to visit la casa de la *señorita* and ask her parent's permission to be able to walk alone with her, but without any physical touch, or maybe to hold hands. *Ser señorita* was a family pride. It meant that you would honor your family by getting married a virgin, *pura* [pure]. I remember our *pláticas* about women who

were returned to their parents on the wedding night because they were not virgins. After that, they were never able to marry and were considered *arruinadas* [worthless].

Each had her own views according to her own experiences. Yet, among all the conversations, it seemed that my Grandmother's was the most influential. My great-Grandmother and mother respected my Grandmother, so I learned to do so too. Since I was young, I remember my Grandmother being *una mujer fuerte* [a strong-willed woman]. Other women respected her and feared her too.

She quickly became the gatekeeper in the community, and individuals who wanted to bring social programs to the community would visit her first before they got implemented. That is how she became a birth control distributor in the area.

I don't remember exactly when my Grandmother was asked to be an ASHONPLAFA representative, but I do remember she began to receive visits from the distributors from the big city. My Grandmother was the only one who sold contraceptives, and condoms in La Guama in the surrounding areas. No one wanted that responsibility, but most of all no one wanted to be a retaliation victim for selling them. People found the idea of birth control in the rural area despicable. *Las pastillas te dan cancer, las pastillas no sirven* [birth control pills give you cancer or are not effective] was the narrative. The Catholic Church in La Guama did not oppose it because there was not a Catholic Church close in the community. The Protestant church's narrative was more along the lines of not offering birth control to unmarried girls because it promoted sexual promiscuity, not because it was an effective way to prevent teen pregnancies.

During the time I was growing up with my Grandmother she had the distribution center, which created opportunities for me to meet and create relationships with people who my parents' religious convictions would have not allowed me to know. One of the most important clients was

Mo, the first openly gay individual in the community. Even though the people of La Guama said they took care of Mo, the reality was that he was constantly being harassed and bullied by men, women and children. ¡*Hey culero!* [hey fag!] a kid would yell from the other side of the road. Mo would answer laughing ¡*callate guiro!* [shut up kid]. *Maricón, marica* [fag] was his first or last name in the community. I got to know Mo more because he lived across from my grandparents' house, where he ran a brothel.

The brothel was also a *cantina* [bar], so it was a busy place. Through all of this, my grandparents would only get after Mo for the noise and the street drinking. They never called the police to shut his business down. He visited them very often to buy condoms or birth control for the working women. But he also spent a lot of time just having conversations with them. He visited my Grandmother every morning: bought a cup of milk and had coffee with her. He enjoyed her *regaños* [scoldings]. *Anda a chequearte Mo* [go and check yourself Mo] she reminded him. He did not want to know if he was carrying AIDS or not. *Usa condon aunque ellos no quieran* [wear a condom even if he does not want] she also suggested to him.

When my Grandmother was not at home, he still came. He bought his milk, condoms and talked to me about life in general. Sometimes he shared too much information. But he also did what my Grandmother did, *aconsejarme* [give me advice]. When business was booming, both sides of the road were filled with cars, trucks and empty buses. It was difficult to walk to school because there were always men on the road drinking, pissing and just waiting for their turn. Girls like me who lived in that side of the community were constantly harassed by the brothel's customers. My grandparents would just say "walk fast and don't engage with anyone in the road." However, the older I got the more harassment I received. *Mamacita, que rica estás* [little mama you look delicious], *que curvas* [nice curves].

Cuidate sipota que estas bonita, aprovecha que tus abuelos te están dando una gran oportunidad de estudiar. No te vayas a casar joven, los hombre solo quieren arruinarte, disfruta la vida. Mira que si a mi me hubieran dado la oportunidad yo hubiera estudiado [take care of yourself girl because you are beautiful, take advantage of the studying opportunity your grandparents are giving you. Don't get married young, men only want to destroy you. If I would have had the same opportunity I would have studied].

In the mid 90s, La Guama had an AIDS outbreak. I was already studying in El Paraiso when rumors started to spread about Mo being the first one to get it. I am sure that Mo was not the first one, but because he was the "gay" in the community, he was the first one to be blamed for it. Mo had a sister in USA who began to pay for his treatment, so he received the treatment. The problem was that the people who knew how to do the treatment refused to do it because they were afraid of getting infected. My Grandmother was not afraid, and she was the only one who offered to do to take care of him. It became a mid-morning routine for my Grandmother to go and see Mo. Every day she went to his house with a cup of fresh milk and cheese. After he received the treatment, she spent at least an hour with him. Mo's name quickly changed from *marica* to *sidoso* [fag to AIDS carrier]. People would scold my Grandmother for risking her life by visiting him. My Grandmother would respond by saying that "*todos somos hijos de Dios* [we are all God's children], and Mo was one of them."

Mo was not the first or last individual who died from AIDS: our family was also affected by the epidemic. My Grandmother's younger sister, then her brother in law were also diagnosed and quickly died. My Grandmother was devastated, but it did not stop her from taking care of people, to the contrary, she has a personal experience to use for educating people about the importance of preventing AIDS. My role during this time was only as a witness. I was living in

another town, so the problem arrived solely in letters or conversations with my Grandfather who was the only one who visited me while I was in *El Paraiso*.

Religion

In my last *testimonio* there were small hints of my Grandmother's faith and activism. My Grandmother experienced the decline of Catholicism, and the rise of Protestantism, consequently by the time I was born, our family only practiced Protestantism. Christianity embodies the religious history of Latin American countries, beginning with colonization and ending with waves of different evangelical groups.

Historical research shows that commercial agreements between Honduras and other countries resulted in the occupation of Honduran territory. One example was the establishment of evangelical churches in the Bay Islands in 1859 by British colonizers (Shepherd, 1993; Anderson, 2003). These evangelical groups became a safety net for new converts, and also an innovative form of social organization that had been missing from Catholicism, where now converts (including women) could become leaders, something they had not been able to do with Catholicism (Stoll, 1990).

Before waves of evangelical churches invaded mainland Honduras, the country had already experienced the invasion of the Catholic Church. By the time I was born, my family had converted to Protestantism, or what some call evangelicals; consequently, I never experienced the Catholic faith like many would assume, since I grew up in a country that was colonized by Catholics. Nonetheless, our family fostered a Catholic history. My Grandmother's family members were fervent Catholics. From my town, the closest Catholic Church was located in Santa Cruz, the municipality. There was only one family in the community who practiced Catholicism. Everyone else was either a *Cristiano* [Christian] or no-*Cristiano* [non-Christian]—

in other words, Protestants or non-Protestants, since there was a strong perception that Catholics were not part of the Christian faith, so they were never grouped in the Christian category.

Development of Protestantism.

In addition to the early literature about Protestantism in the Bay Islands, the topic of Protestantism as scholarly work began to appear in the 1960s, but it was not until the 1980s that the topic received more attention from the academic community (Burnett, 1992). The literature on the history of evangelical churches in Honduras demonstrates waves of evangelical sects. The first wave dates back to the mid-1800s when British nationals established the first churches in the Bay Islands (Shepherd, 1993; Anderson, 2003). The second wave came a century later, but this time— to the mainland when the Anglicans of the Society of the Gospel in Foreign Parts began their sects in Northern Honduras (Norsworthy & Barry, 1994).

Evangelical sects grew rapidly: in the 1960s there were only a dozen and by the 1980s there were fifty (Acker, 1988). Opposite to the growth of evangelical churches, the Catholic Church was declining. One of the main reasons was the lack of Honduran priests that made it impossible for the Catholic Church to have a parish in all the communities. For example, my community depended on whether or not the Catholic priest came to town or not, and in most cases he did not come, so the community grew without an established parish.

By 1970, there were only 232 priests in Honduras—one priest for every 9,950 Catholics. This was a crisis for the Church, so in order to survive, they changed their ministry to rely upon the laity (Holland, 1981). As a consequence, the lack of Catholic churches and priests made it easy for evangelicals to recruit the lost flock (Gill, 1994). So, while evangelicals were succeeding, the Catholic Church was dying.

Some affirm that the growth of evangelical churches in Latin America was because they offered a temporary refuge to their everyday problems (Baker, 2005). Meanwhile, the Catholic Church criticized the Protestants' faith with a generally critical approach, which demonstrated their lack of knowledge about the diversity in the faith. Furthermore, they continued to neglect addressing their own crisis, which contributed to their inability to compete with the evangelical church (Norsworthy & Barry, 1994).

As I mentioned earlier, due to the lack of clergy, the Catholic Church created a laity-based ministry. This ministry transformed the role of the Catholic Church in the country, and it opened up leadership opportunities outside the church and offered a new organizing platform their faithful had been missing. The lay ministry was now a grass-roots social activism movement for the poor Honduran (Holland, 1981). Meanwhile, the Protestant Church maintained its efforts in growing their sects, and by 1988, 12% of Honduras had become evangelicals (Norsworthy & Barry, 1994). These shifts changed the country's dynamics and the roles of the church in social activism.

The Marriage of Religion and Politics.

The Protestant community in Honduras became more aggressive in maintaining the status quo, as well as becoming conservative in the political affairs of the country. While the Catholic Church was organizing rural communities, the Protestant Church was abolishing them in the name of fighting communism. Evangelicals from the United States were funding evangelical sects. With the help of those donors, the Protestant Church became a main player in the country's political arena of the 1980s. The Robertson's Christian Broadcasting Network and the Unification Church both contributed to the war against communism: the first donated between 3 to 7 million dollars to the US government to back the *Contras* in Honduras and Nicaragua, and

the second contributed to an anti-communist business lobby: the Association for the Progress of Honduras (APROH): an organization run by the Honduran military General (Martin, 1999; Acker, 1988). There is ample literature giving evidence that the evangelicals moved from saving souls to becoming middlemen, as a voice from US Christians to Honduran politics. This involvement created once again friction between both faiths. The Catholic Church criticized evangelicals' involvement in politics and prohibited their faithful from participating in organizations run by evangelicals (Martin, 1999).

The human rights violations perpetrated by the Honduran military prompted the Catholic Church to become more proactive in becoming the sanctuary for war refugees. So while the evangelicals were fighting a war on communism and contributing to the human right atrocities, the Catholics became more than saviors of souls—they became involved in social activism by protecting the persecution of Central American *campesinos* (Acker, 1988; Norsworthy & Barry, 1994). It is important to disclose that the Catholic Church was also divided. First, hierarchal views came from bishops and higher church posts, who promoted individualism and obedience in ignoring the atrocities and militarization of the country. Secondly, the developmentalist views that came from *campesinos* and clergy were promoting non-confrontation and a legalistic approach; and lastly, the prophetic view that came from *campesinos* and workers' organizations that called it human right abuses by the Honduran and American military (Acker, 1988). In other words, there were three views: the hierarchal, the developmentalist (or Liberation theology), and the prophetic (Norsworthy & Barry, 1994). This diversity of views affected the grass-roots activism that was succeeding in the rural areas. Elvia Alvarado (1987) describes how the Catholic Church abandoned the social work that was happening in her community:

> It was the church that first started organizing us women. I'd never done anything before getting involved in the mothers' clubs. The church forged the path for us, but they wanted us to follow behind. And then when we started walking ahead of them, when we started to open new paths ourselves, they tried to stop us. They decided that maybe organizing women was not such a good idea after all . . . And the very church that organized us, the same church that opened our eyes, suddenly began to criticize us, calling us communist and Marxist. It was at this point that the church abandoned us (pp. 16-17).

Alvarado's account of the Catholic Church's abandonment demonstrates how contradictory the religious organizations in Honduras were in the 80s. Their ideologies differed from a bishop to a priest, from rural to urban, and from a Catholic to an evangelical. This was the religious environment that influenced the cultural landscape of the country, and it offered an opaque view on the political, socioeconomic, and cultural view of the country. Faith-based grass-roots movements did not succeeded in Honduras the same way they succeed in other Central American countries because there was not unity among faith-based groups, but there was outside money funding an uninvited war. Furthermore, the rural area was the zone that was the most devastated socially and economically in Honduras during the 1980s; therefore, its population became more disadvantaged in comparison to other Central American countries.

Los Escogidos: A *Testimonio* About Being Left Behind

Cuando la trompeta suene

en aquel día final,

y que el alba eterna rompa en claridad;

Cuando las naciones salvas

a su patria lleguen yá,

y que sea pasada lista, allí he de estar.

Cuando allá se pase lista,

Cuando allá se pase lista,

Cuando allá se pase lista;

A mi nombre yo feliz responderé.

Crystal Lewis

Ever since I am able to remember, this was always the end hymn during the *cultos* [church services]. I have a love/hate relationship with it. My hate feeling is because the hymn is about calling me during Tribulation, when Jesus comes to pick up the chosen ones. I never considered myself among them because I refused to accept Jesus in my heart. I always knew that it was untrue, the whole Christianity thing. Another point was the fact that I believed Honduras was the last country that could be saved. It was a country full of sinners and hypocrites.

My love/hate feeling towards this hymn has to do with the fact that it was my great-Grandmother's favorite. She always requested it during church. I loved *mamita*, and I feel bad hating something she enjoyed so much.

I was born en *una familia Cristiana*, we are Christians— my grandparents would say. Our church in Balin was founded by my Grandfather and his brothers. Using their own money

and funds from a missionary in Tegucigalpa enabled them to build the church. It was very small and if you looked from the outside, it seemed like any other house in the community. The church was always low in funds and attendance, so pastors did not stay long. I also believe people did not attend because the church was run by the old men (my Grandfather and uncles) who were too old fashioned for the progressive times. Additionally, new converts did not have money for basic needs, so offerings to the church were not something they could afford.

Our family attended church every Sunday, Wednesday and Saturday. Sunday was Bible School, Wednesday was all-family gathering, and Saturday was Youth Group. Most Sundays after church, we stayed for lunch at my Uncle's B's house. His wife was a *Cristiana*, and he was the black sheep of the family. I appreciated *tio* [uncle] B because he would get in arguments about religion with my Grandfather. It was fun to listen because my Grandfather would get flustered and contentious with him. The arguments were not too much in depth—my uncle would mostly call out the hypocrisy of the church. My uncle's arrogant attitude never stopped my grandparents from visiting him. My Grandfather would say that someday Jesus was going to win his heart.

I loved visiting my uncle because I was close with my cousins with my cousins who never went to church, so I never felt judged by them. They did what normal teenagers do: experiment with real life; they danced, drank, and partied hard. I never heard my grandparents criticizing them. They would only say that one day my cousins were going to grow up and become *cristianos* too. My cousin and I would talk how hypocritical *cristianos* were. Our other Christian cousins were quick to judge us while they were doing the same things behind their parents' backs.

I really do not know when I began to believe that I did not belong in the church, but it seems like I always felt that way, or who knows, maybe it started after various unfortunate incidents that made me doubt more. The only things I enjoyed about church were that it was located in the same community my cousins lived in, and I also loved the drive back home at night because I would lay in the bed of my grandpa's truck and look up at the night sky, trying to count the stars or follow the moon with my eyes all the way home.

At church, shaming was the price I paid for attending. I really dreaded the end of every service because the Pastor would do his usual yelling of *¿Quién va a aceptar a Jesucristo ésta noche?* [Who will accept Jesus Christ tonight?]. I always sat in the back and every time people were invited to go in front for salvation, prayers, or repenting, my family would look at me and wait to see if I would raise my hand that night. I don't know why they would do it all the time, since every outcome was the same. I would feel the need to go to the bathroom or outside for fresh air or just leave. It was painful because I was always the target. The cousins who were not Christians did not even enter the church, they stayed outside witnessing everything that was happening and making fun of the ones (like me) who were obligated to be inside. Every time I came outside, my cousin would tease me saying *casi, casi* [almost, almost], which the meant, they almost made me a *cristiana* that day.

I resented being at church because women were blamed for everything. From the moment Eve decided to share that apple with Adam we women were the sinners who brought men down. While women were being blamed for the church's sins, the husbands were having affairs and were never shamed for them. I remember when a husband in the church had an affair, his wife ended up *puesta en disciplina* [disciplined] for complaining about the lack of support from

church members. Disciplined? I asked my Grandmother, after she shared the day's meeting; *hipócritas,* I said. Those were the types of issues that my cousin and I talked about it.

Every sermon was based on blame, and/or scare tactics like being sent to hell. I remember one pastor illustrating what hell was like by lighting up candles in front of the congregation and asking all the sinners (me included) to come up front. He said *¿ustedes quieren saber cómo se sentiría estar en el infierno?* [Do you want to know how does it feel being in hell?] Let's see how long you can hold your fingers above the lighted candle. I did not do it, but my other cousins, to be funny, did it. For them it became a game of resistance. Then the Pastor yelled, *¡Esto es ahora, imaginense por eternidad!* [This is now, imagine for eternity!]. My Grandfather did not see that scare tactic as appropiatte and he reprimanded the pastor later on. They also showed movies about hell, and about the beauty of being with Jesus, where the saved live in paradise: with beautiful music, paved gold streets and in harmony with all kinds of animals, flowers, I still did not buy it. The pressure to become Christian was an everyday burden, as my grandparents sent me to every kids' and youth camp they could, so maybe *yo aceptaba a Cristo* [I accepted Christ]. I was always asked, *¿no has aceptado?* [Haven't you accepted?]. I got so tired of it. My life revolved around my acceptance of Jesus.

During this chaos over my soul, my Grandmother did not seem to follow much of what her church wanted. She was one of the women who got disciplined all the time. I was thirteen years old, and I wanted to have my ears pierced which according to the church it was a sin because it was calling attention to our bodies. I told my Grandmother, and she said yes, with the condition that I had to make sure to keep them clean to avoid an infection. A friend of hers pierced my ears with a needle and ice. My mother bought me a pair of gold earrings with a pink fake diamond. I was so happy because I had wanted to wear earrings for a long time. The

following Sunday, we went to church, and at the end of the service, my Grandmother and I were waiting for my Grandfather. I was sitting in the truck bed talking with my sinner cousin (that's how what we called each other) when my uncle (my Grandfather's oldest brother) came to the back of the car. He looked at me, noticed my earrings and asked me *¿Por qué te abriste las orejas?* [Why did you pierce your ears?]. I was so afraid of him that I did not say a thing, just shrugged my shoulders. He then added— *Solo las mujeres de la calle se abren las orejas* [only street women pierce their ears]. It was on that day that I began to notice more how illogical Christian people were. I had been compared to a prostitute just because I got my ears pierced. Did he call his wife a *mujer de la calle*? She had her ears pierced too. My Grandmother just looked at me and nodded to me as a warning, to not be *malcriada* [don't be disrespectful], because she was afraid I was going to tell him how I really felt about his comment. All way back home, while I rode in my grandpa's truck, I was sad and thought a lot about it. How quickly I was judged about who I was just because of a pair of earrings. As soon as we got home, my Grandmother told me not to listen to my uncle. A pair of earrings did not indicate sin, and she showed me that she also had her ears pierced. I didn't remember noticing that at all. So the next Sunday, she wore earrings. That was the biggest message she ever sent to me.

My Grandmother was one modern *cristiana*. I think because she lived in the city for a long time, she experienced more of an urban *cristianismo* [urban Christianity]. She knew I wanted to wear lipstick too, which was prohibited at church, so she bought me a very light pink lipstick—it had enough color that it showed up to see that it was there, but it was not so bright that it would bring the attention of the Christian uncle. Wearing makeup was another sin, and solo las mujeres fáciles se maquillan así [only easy women wear makeup like that] we would be told.

Even though the church kept telling me how to live a life without sin, everything they were telling me contradicted what my friends at school were doing: listening to music, going out with boys, watching *telenovelas* [soap operas], but I was doing the opposite. Christianity for me was an oppressive way of life, so I refused to practice it. I would listen to Michael Jackson, Madonna, and all the 80s music I could get my hands on. Even though I didn't understand English, it was always described as *musica del diablo*, so it became my form of rebellion.

CHAPTER FOUR: THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Introduction

The history of Honduras and other Central American countries like Guatemala and El Salvador demonstrate the roadblocks women have endured in order to become *liberated.* It is here that questions arise about how a woman like *mi abuela* [my Grandmother] was able to overcome socioeconomic and cultural barriers in a country dominated by rhetoric that was keeping women second class citizens, a country in the middle of an uninvited war, and a hub for anti-Communist experiments that left our country economically devastated.

Due to my Grandmother's social involvement she has been called both *la mujer mala que no sirve* [the bad woman who is worthless], and *las cuatro Marias: la India, la virgen, la madre, y la puta* [the four Mary's: the Indian, the virgin, the mother, and the whore]. In a moment of struggle, theory becomes necessary to answer my questions. I found hooks (1994) describes the search for theory as follows:

> I came to theory because I was hurting—the pain within me was so intense that I could not go on living. I came to theory desperate, wanting to comprehend—to grasp what was happening around and within me. Most importantly, I wanted to make the hurt go away. I saw in theory then a location for healing. (p. 59)

I felt the same way, and I could not continue with this quest without something or someone explaining me the reason why I felt the way I did. To answer those questions I chose theory in flesh, Freire's social-emancipatory theory, and Mestiza consciousness as my tools to find the answers. I will begin this chapter by discussing the application of theory to this study.

Theory in the Flesh

> *No tengo interés en vivir dentro de una sociedad que usa el análisis, la investigación, y la experimentación para realizar su visión del destino cruel que espera a los que no son bastardos de los peregrinos una sociedad con la arrogancia en la ascendencia, la luna en la opresión, y el sol en la destrucción..*
>
> [I am not interested in living inside a society that uses analysis, investigation, experimentation, to realize his vision of the cruel fate that awaits those who are not bastards of pilgrims in a partnership with arrogance in ascent, the moon oppression and the sun destruction]. (Cameron, 1988)

Theory in the flesh was born as a need for women of color to subvert and resist the existing paradigms (Hurtado, 2010). The lack of true representation of the Chicanas' and Mestizas' lived experiences inspired this theory to explain the physical realities of women of color. It is a mapping methodology to understand *la mujer de color* [the woman of color], and a philosophy she uses to defragment her cultural and racial experiences via holistic lenses (Moraga and Castillo, 1988). A theory in the flesh, it is "one where the physical realities of our lives–our skin color, the land or concrete we grew up on, our sexual longings–all fuse to create a politic born out of necessity" (Moraga, 1983 p. 23). A woman of color, being brown, growing up in a *país tercermundista* [a Third World country], and living in an oppressive society, would interpret her lived experiences differently than a privileged White woman who has resided in a First World country and not survived oppressive experiences. For this theory to work, it is also imperative "to read through both biological and social concepts, specifically family, emotional investments, social status, corporeal knowledge, and struggle (Ulibarri, 2012, p. 98). In the case of this study, the social concepts of religious, educational and women's reproductive rights were

embodied in my Grandmother's and my experiences. For us, being born brown with indigenous features embodied the biological concepts; both our biological and social concepts are flesh and blood experiences that created a politic born out necessity, and this is the essence of theory in the flesh.

During the writing process of their first book, the Latina Feminist Group learned that in order for them to theorize their experiences, they had to acknowledge that their bodies were maps of oppression, institutional violence and stress, exclusion, objectification, and abuse (2001). It is for the same reason I believed that theory in the flesh was adequate to theorize our experiences. Moraga and Anzaldúa call it "put self in text" (Negrón-Muntaner, 2006); where "theory should emanate from what we live, breathe and experience in our everyday lives and it is only in breaking boundaries, crossing borders, claiming fragmentation and hybridity that theory will finally be useful for liberation" (Hurtado, 2010, p. 216).

Anzaldúa in her book *La frontera/borderland,* used metaphors to describe the concept of flesh as the vivid experiences of the oppressed. She describes the physical U.S. –Mexican border as *una herida abierta* [an open gash] as an example of a physical space that emanates bodily sufferings (Hartley, 2010). Additionally, her representation of the border as flesh experience showed once again that our lived understandings distinguish us from *them* and makes us the *other* (2007). In my case, I used *la frontera* [borderland]as my physical experience of crossing borders, my state of mind, and, additionally, as the politic born out necessity from the result of living in a society where *los atravesados* [crossers] are constantly raped, maimed, strangled, gassed, and shot (Anzaldúa, 2007). In the case of this study, the physical realities of both my Grandmother and I were framed in the social concepts of religion, education and women's reproductive rights. Our biological notions were already embodied with the social ones (see

Figure 1). For example, being born brown with indigenous features while working with White missionaries, or being born a woman in a *machista* society.

It is important to note that theory in the flesh has been extended in indigenous studies as *theory in the flesh and in the spirit rooted in the earth*. Hernandez-Avila (2010) explains, "this is what indigenous women have to offer, even when they are urban Indians, living away from their homeland. They/we have something, call it memory, the root of the truth that calls into our deepest reaches powerfully." (p. X). This explanation aligns with what I had to do to reach a state of *Mestiza* consciousness: I had to go back 37 years later and recount my memories from childhood and my youth so that I am able to make sense and come to terms with the borderland state.

In summary, I would like to reemphasize two points that corroborate the important use of this theory for my study: First: that "theory in the flesh is also naming our self and telling our stories in our own words" (Apostolidis, 2008, p. 21). My Grandmother tells her story, and I tell mine. Second, once we tell those stories they become an embodied production of theory (Apostolidis, 2008). This new construction will contribute to scholarly work about the politic born through my Grandmother and me.

Social Emancipatory Theory

Social-emancipatory theory was developed in the context of Brazilian poverty, illiteracy, and oppression, where personal empowerment and social transformation were intertwined with cultural, political, and social circumstances (Merriam, Caffarella Baumgartner, 2007), similar to Honduran environments. As one of the poorest countries in Central America, Honduras suffers from high unemployment and unequal income distribution (www.oecd.org). Freire's philosophy and pedagogy is also centered on the potential humans possess for emancipation and creativity in

the middle of cultural and economic oppression. La Belle (1987) describes this approach of personal empowerment, social transformation, and *concientización* [concientization] argues for an education perpetuating social participation, self-reflection, critical thought, and personal development interconnected to the social struggle. Lloyd (1972) describes the process of as:

> Conscientization is a social process, taking place among men as they unite in common reflection and action upon their world. This does not occur not through intellectual effort alone but through "praxis," the unity of reflection and action. Conscientization, then, does not stop at an awakening of perception but proceeds to action, which in turn provides the basis for new perception, new reflection (p. 5).

I use the terms "social emancipatory theory," and "critical consciousness" interchangeably to describe *conscientización*. I will define each one and explain how I have come to understand each term. Merriam, Caffarella & Baumgartner (2007), explain that social emancipatory philosophy is Paulo Freire's philosophy of transformative learning" (p.140). *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* is Freire's canonical work that describes the process of *conscientización*, and critical consciousness of repressed groups. Researchers agree that Freire uses that term as equivalent to critical self-consciousness, which is a more sophisticated state of transformation (Aronowitz, 2001; Lloyd, 1972: hooks, 1994; Merriam, Caffarella & Baumgartner, 2007). At the same time, Freire (1970) is clear to state that critical consciousness is deeper consciousness that awakens an awareness, helping individuals to emerge from their submersion as well as become agents of change. An individual who is acquiring consciousness is also empowering and transforming. It is

important to note that *conscientización* is an ongoing process that is joined by meaningful praxis (Merriam, Caffarella & Baumgartner, 2007; hooks, 1994).

I believe this theory applies perfectly to the Honduran sociocultural context because it was developed under the same context of poverty, illiteracy and oppression that Honduras suffers. The process of personal empowerment, social transformation, and *conscientización* argues for an education that fosters social participation, self-reflection, critical thought, and personal development interconnected to the social struggle (La Belle, 1987). Central American examples that offer insights on this process can be appreciated in the literature of Honduran activist Elvia Alvarado (1987), Salvadorian activist María Teresa Tula (1995), and Guatemalan activist Rigoberta Menchú (1983), even though each of them focused on different activist efforts: land reform, civil war, and indigenous genocide— all social movements that demonstrated collective equality, in part as the result of adult illiteracy. Moreover, these are all examples of women's personal empowerment, social transformation, emancipation and development as agents of change.

The process of conscientization is poignant, the individual becomes aware of oppression and eventually becomes part of the social change (Merriam, Caffarella Baumgartner, 2007). It is here where the individual becomes conscious of the paradox that "it is only the oppressed who, by freeing themselves, can free their oppressors" (Freire, 1970 p. 56). Social emancipatory theory and its process of *concientización* is, I believe, a theory that allows me to explain my Grandmother's process of emancipation in Honduras. Learning how to read and then becoming part of the literacy programs in Honduras allowed her to truly engage in social change for the community of La Guama. Her engagement with education as an adult (which will be discussed in chapter 6) demonstrates what Freire describes as the process of liberation and *concientización*.

Mestiza Consciousness

"Ya me canse de pelear. Me rindo. Estoy vencida, déjalo, deja que las paredes se caigan" ["I am tired of fighting. I surrender. I give up, let go, let the walls fall"] Anzaldúa (2007).

La *Conciencia Mestiza* [Mestiza Consciousness] is the road that takes *la mujer liberada* to a new era to "breakdown the subject-object duality that keeps her prisoner and to show in the flesh and through the images of her work how duality is transcended" (Perez, 2005, p.2). The *mestiza's* duality is:

> The product of the transfer of the cultural and spiritual values of one group to another. Being tricultural, monolingual, bilingual, trilingual, speaking a patois, and in a state of perpetual transition, the *mestiza* faces the dilemma of the mixed breed (Anzaldúa, 2007, p. 100).

I see la *Conciencia Mestiza* [Mestiza Consciousness] as the transformative process that maintains the politic born in the *mujer liberada*. This process is alive and helps me cope with my physical realities of living in *la frontera* [the borderland]. It allows me to shift back and forth, towards and away from the U.S. and the Honduran culture, as well as to develop a narrative that honors and critiques both cultural landscapes. By accepting this disruption, I acknowledge it as a way of culture (Anzaldúa, 1987). In claiming a personal space, a new level of consciousness is reached, the level of Mestiza consciousness.

One of the most difficult tasks in this journey was to find my place in this new world. I believe *la conciencia Mestiza* only applies to my experiences and not to my Grandmother's. In Honduras we were the racial majority, but we both faced more gender discrimination. I hypothesize that we only encountered racial bias during the times we were with the missionaries.

It was not until I migrated to the Unites States that I experienced racial favoritism, and stopped being *Hondureña* and began being Latina.

En Honduras hablo español Catracho [In Honduras, I speak Catracho Spanish], but in the United States I speak English. *En Honduras llevo sandalias y pantalones cortos* [In Honduras I wear sandals and shorts]; in the United States I wear boots, and jeans. It is this back and forth cultural experience that threatens my loyalty to both countries. Perez (2005) explains that:

> La *Conciencia Mestiza* [Mestiza Consciousness] is the road that takes *la mujer tercermundista* [the Third World woman] to a new era. It is here where mestiza consciousness can "breakdown the subject-object duality that keeps her prisoner and to show in the flesh and through the images of her work how duality is transcended. (p. 2)

Tying the *Trenza*

In the case of this study, my Grandmother's social participation in women's reproductive rights and *patronatos* [community committee] gave her the tools for self-reflection, critical thought and personal development. As a child my social participation came by default from my Grandmother's involvement in the community. When I became a young adult, my self-reflection, critical though and personal development began to appear early during my migration in the course of my secondary, high school, and college academic careers. I propose Mestiza consciousness as the quintessential state of a *mujer liberada* (see *Figure 6*. below).

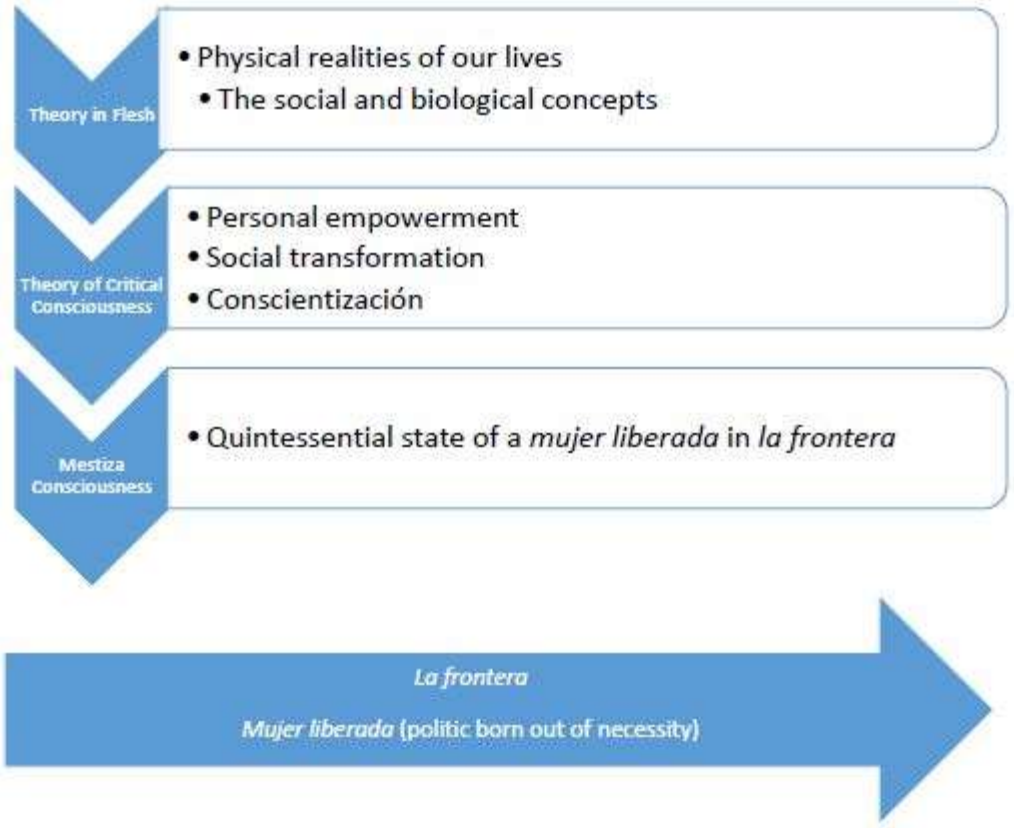


Figure 5. Theoretical Framework. This figure demonstrates how the theories and concepts apply to this particular study. Due to this movement, the state of consciousness forms cyclical loops; each loop demonstrates transformative moments, and a tangled state of emotions and physical realities. Additionally, after I reviewed the literature and these theories, I was able to make a connection between all the concepts and the symbolism of a trenza (see Figure 6 below).

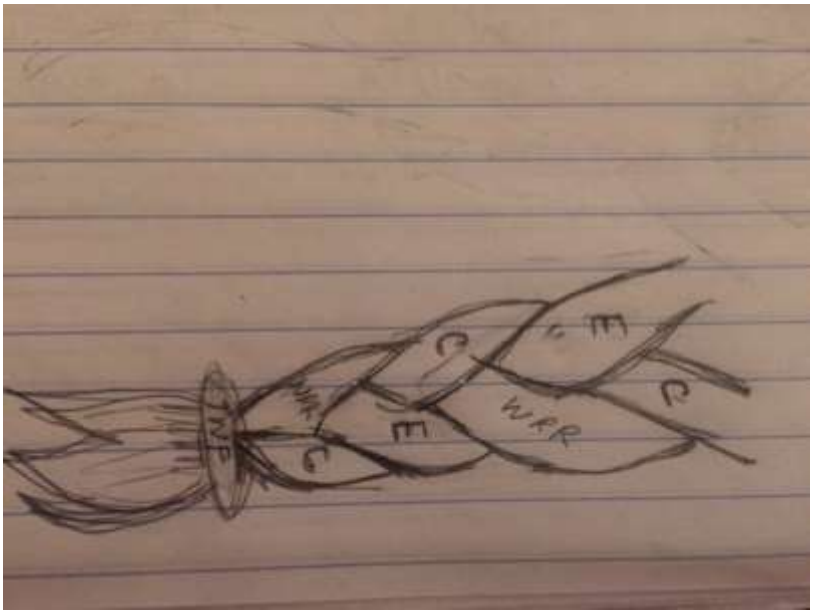


Figure 6. The Braiding Process. This figure represents how I braid Education (E), Christianity (C), Women's Reproductive Rights (WRR), and Una Mujer Liberada (formerly known as Third World Feminist, TWF).

CHAPTER FIVE: METHODOLOGY

Introduction

After discussing theories I employed in my study, this chapter examines the use of *testimonio* as a method of inquiry to answer the research questions. The chapter is organized as follows: first I discuss *testimonio* as a genre and qualitative method. Second, I discuss the data collection, participation and the interview process. Third, I review the analysis process. The investigative inquiries I aimed to answer are:

1. How did my Grandmother influence my feminist views?
2. Does my Grandmother consider herself a feminist woman?
3. How does the concept of Mestiza consciousness fit in the narrative of a rural feminist woman?

Testimonio as a Genre

Before I discuss *testimonio* as a research tool, I would like to discuss *testimonio* as a genre because that will provide a background for its usage in Latin American literature, and its evolution into a methodology. Beverley (2004) defines *testimonio* as:

> A transitional cultural form appropriate to processes of rapid social and historical change, but also destined to give way to different forms of representation as these processes move forward to other stage . . . and the human collectivities that are agents come into possession of new forms of power and knowledge. (p. 61)

Testimonio offers a singular collective perspective in which authenticity and credibility are linked to a community or group (Stephen, 1995). It is embodied by four important characteristics: (1) it must include intention of affirmation and empowerment, (2) it must first name, and then condemn, oppression (Reyes and Rodríguez, 2012), (3) it must contain discourse

located in current struggles and hostilities, and (4) it must be produced by a subaltern to an interlocutor (Beverly, 1991).

In the Chicana/o literature, *testimonio* is extensively discussed as upholding Freire's liberationist pedagogy. Both his (1970) *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* and (2004) *Pedagogy of Hope* address how the subaltern finds self and voice through their personal testimonies, then becoming transformed and empowered. This pedagogy "advocates writing as means of liberation—dialogically informing a narrative that is first spoken, and then used to make literacy meaningful as a dynamic entry to conscientization and liberation from oppression" (Reyes and Rodríguez, 2012, p. 527). Through speaking, not only do we gain voice, but we also further share them with our community, with the aim of achieving a concert of voices for the collective and individual.

The origins of *testimonios* are rooted in the revolutionary movements of Latin America (Stephen, 1995), which started in Cuba around the 1970s, and spread to Central and South America during the contemporaneous military dictatorships (Maier, 2004). Through these *testimonios*, citizens built their speaking narratives and opened a personal door to the interlocutors, who then linked those oral narratives to documented evidence (Thompson, 2010). *Testimonio*, therefore, demands and creates a change of research authorship, in which the witness of the events maintains the authority as both author of the research and witness of the events (Abbott, 2011).

The publication of testimonial literature by women in Latin America has been less prominent. In fact, between the 17th century and the 19th century, only ten female writers have emerged from that male-dominated society (Maier, 2004). However, between the 80s and 90s, three great Central American women emerged: Rigoberta Menchú from Guatemala, Elvia

Alvarado from Honduras, and María Teresa Tula from El Salvador shared their personal encounters as social activists in their home countries via *testimonio* (Alvarado, 1987; Menchú, 1983; Tula, 1995). Her book *I, Rigoberta Menchú: An Indian Woman in Guatemala* is a *testimonio* that sheds light on the atrocities committed by the Guatemalan government against indigenous groups between 1960 and 1996 (Menchú, 1993). Elvia Alvarado's *Don't Be Afraid Gringo: A Honduran Woman Speaks from the Heart* shares the struggles of Honduran women *campesinas* (peasants) who organized to combat malnutrition in their own communities. María Teresa Tula wrote *Este es mi Testimonio* (1995) to share her experiences as a social activist during the darkest years of El Salvador and detail the human rights violations in the country during the civil war in the 1980s. These three texts present examples of women's direct engagement in the narrative and the use of *testimonio* to denounce the ubiquity of injustice and offer insight on the Third World feminist experience in Latin America at the micro-level. They exemplify the feminist who is at the front of the struggle for equality and social justice, often not well-known, yet not looking for recognition. She leads, yet her voice is that of her community.

In the United States, it was not until the 1980s that testimonial literary works by Latina women became widespread; this scholarship emerged in Chicana/o studies, critical race theory, and critical studies when Cherríe Moraga, Aurora Levins Morales, and Gloria Anzaldúa, all wrote against the definition of culture by the Anglo and Latino patriarchal groups (Reyes and Rodriguez, 2012; Torres, 1991). The publication of testimonial literature has increased, nevertheless those same publications have been criticized because their narratives are written *about* women in developing countries, not by women *in* developing countries (Mohanty, 2003). Thus, do not demonstrate direct engagement in the conversation. In addition, these texts

moved the narratives from the institutional margins to the institutional center (Gugelberger, 1996).

Other critics go further to discredit testimonial literature. One example is David Stoll's *Rigoberta Menchú and The Story of All Poor Guatemalans* (1999), which disputed the veracity of events described by the indigenous activist and created a strong response against his book and his privileged point of view demonstrating the reasons why *testimonio* is challenged (Dulfano, 2004; Beverly, 2004). Another response to Stoll's book came in Spivak's (1988) explanation that his criticism was based on a rejection of the possibility of a union between radicalized intelligentsia and subaltern voices. Beverley (2004) and Sklodowska, (1990-91) went further, wondering if this rejection of the subaltern voice stemmed from the critics' refusals of those who reject to abide by the critics' societal norms, which included the critics' authority, and identity. This rejection often display itself as a woman in a man's world, an indigenous in a Latino's world, or a lower class, illiterate person in the exclusive world of academia (Tula, 1995; Alvarado, 1987; Menchú, 1983; Beverly, 2004).

Testimonio then, is subjective, carries postmodern concerns of aesthetics, truth, and politics and is a struggle of the elite vs. the popular (Beverley, 2004; Sklodowska, 1990-91). The use of it is no longer revolutionary; it is now globalized (Beverly, 2004). For example, Chicana and Latina scholars use it as a way to reflect on their experiences as women of color in academia (Alarcón, Cruz, Jackson, Prieto, Rodriguez-Arroyo, 2011); other scholars use *testimonio* to give voice to "a subject who has experienced or witnessed great trauma, oppression, forced migration, or violence, or of a subject who has participated in a political movement for social justice" (Cruz, 2012, p. 461). It now serves multiple purposes, and has evolved into a commonly used genre in academia. In its purest form, *testimonio* is valid literature, offering the story of the marginalized

who desires solidarity between the intellectuals and the masses (Beverly, 2004; Bartow, 2004; Maier, 2004).

The history of *testimonio* is the incentive for this study but it has also become a personal journey with three purposes: (1) to gain knowledge of Third World Feminism at the level of the everyday life, inversely from its usual organized movement discourse, (2) to hear a holistic narrative that places the voice of the subaltern at the forefront,and (3) to move *testimonio* back to its transgressive and counter-hegemonic roots.

Testimonio as a Qualitative Method

> *Para dejar que el "Otro" hable se requiere el invento de múltiples metodologías que subvierten el racismo, heterosexismo, y la imperialización de la lengua.* [To let the "Other" speak requires the invention of multiple methods that subvert racist, heterosexist, and imperializing language]. (Hurtado, 2010, p. 217)

Non-Western thought encourages the use of methodology to collect the experiences of the "*Other*." Feminist scholars argue that poetry, literature and biography can be sources of data—not just fiction (Quintana, 1996); therefore, reading visual representations and art can be indicators of social production and reproduction (Fregoso, 1993; Gaspar de Alba, 1998). In the field of education, *testimonio* has now become a methodological approach that is both a process and a product (Bernal, Burciaga and Carmona, 2012). I chose it as the methodology for this writing product because I believe it aligns with a *mujer liberada* epistemological framework. Similar to Critical Race Theory, Central American feminism and *testimonio* also (1) reveals injustices caused by oppression, (2) challenges dominant Eurocentric views, (3) validates experiential knowledge, (4) acknowledges the power of human collectivity, and (5) is committed to racial and social justice (Pérez Huber, 2009). Rigoberta Menchú, Elvia Alvarado, and María

Teresa Tula's books are great examples of what the *testimonio* of *una mujer liberada* should confirm (Tula, 1995; Alvarado, 1987; Menchú, 1983). Undeniably, it is a politicized methodology; The Latin Feminist Group (2001) verifies: "*Testimonio* has been in movements of liberation in Latin America, offering an artistic form and methodology to create politicized understanding of identity and community" (p.3).

In this study, I use *testimonio* to capture my Grandmothers' and my physical realities of our lives as mother and daughter in rural Honduras. I interview my Grandmother three times, where she reveals her experiences as a young woman who endured gender, racial, and institutional discrimination.

Limitations with *Testimonio*

As I previously discussed, the contestation of *testimonio* as a literary genre and methodology may limit this study. "Any analysis of testimonial literature entails its concurrence with basic postmodern premises: collapse of the distinction between elite and mass cultures, collapse of master narratives, fragmentation and decentering of the subject, and affirmation of alterity" (Maier, 2004, p. 7). The second possible limitation is only in regards to the dynamics of my family. I expect my Grandfather to feel left out of the narrative; he is our family's patriarch, so, some negotiations may be necessary.

Finally, I would like to re-state two important points for this research. First, I aimed to gain a sense of what we have experienced on our individual journeys, and second, while feminism in Central America has been typically framed within the context of organized movements, this study focused on how it affected the everyday lives of individuals.

The Methodological Research Design: Data Collection

In this study I followed Creswell's (2008) four steps for collecting data as my research methodology: identifying the subjects of study, selecting them, acquiring their permission to study them, and collecting information using *testimonio*. For both my narrative and my Grandmother's narrative, I created a timeline, and collected textual artifacts and photographs. I also conducted phone interviews.

Participant, Recruitment, and Informed Consent

After I identified my Grandmother and myself as the subjects of study, I called her and asked her if I could include her in the dissertation I was writing. Now, I did not say *dissertation*, I said a *un papel para la Universidad* [a school paper] that was going to take a long time. Right away, she agreed to be part of this study, and asked me when we could begin. I could sense her excitement, and her reaction proved that my decision to include her voice had been the appropriate one. I knew that my Grandmother's contribution was going to serve as a platform for new agency, generating opportunities for my her and I to share our voices. This would also lay the foundation for other women who want to pursue the same type of study to share their voices.

In order for me to begin to collect data, I contacted the International Review Board (IRB) at my institution for their written consent. As part of the process, I had to translate the interview questions from English to Spanish and receive approval from a translator. After the IRB process was completed, I called my Grandmother, and obtain her consent, and let her know that we were approved to begin our *pláticas* [conversations].

Steps for Data Collection

Simultaneous to the collection of my Grandmother's *testimonios*, I began to gather other data, which consisted of me making a self-portrait as guide for identifying the emergent themes

(see Appendix C), and once they were obvious, I began to write an autobiographical timeline (see Appendix D). This step was very productive for me because it gave me a sense of what events were important to share and write about. I created the timeline in table format and divided it into three columns, with each one representing education, Christianity and women's reproductive rights. Focusing on these three themes allowed me to emphasize particular events and narrow down the amount of data I needed to collect. I then divided the themes by year and the place where each event occurred. For example, from 1984 to 1989, I lived in La Guama and the major events in education I considered important were that I:

- Moved to an upper grade because I was academically ahead of my peers,
- Participated in the folklore dance group at school,
- Organized Cultural Saturday,
- Covered classes when teachers did not show up to teach,
- Helped my 4th grade teacher with physical education,
- Met a new student from the city who moved to La Guama,
- Met Profe. M.,
- Graduated with twelve other students from sixth grade.

These events worked as a guide to write my life story, as well as to sort through which data I felt was essential or non-essential. The timeline did not include every aspect of my life, the stories I wrote were the ones that contained more detail. Once the timeline was completed, I began collecting textual artifacts related to the topics in my timeline.

Collecting Textual Artifacts

Chang (2008) defines textual artifacts as "material manifestations of culture that illuminate their historical context (p.107). I collected three textual artifacts: (1) my personal diary, (2) personal letters written by my Grandmother, and (3) a thematic life story.

My personal diary was a collection that I began writing in 1992 and finished writing in 1994. The first entry commenced two days before my *Quinceañera* [Fifteen Years Old Celebration], and the last was completed in 1994 when I turned seventeen. This textual artifact was the most difficult for me to use in this study because of its personal nature. I really felt that "Dina" (*la mujer* liberada) was invading "Yami's" (*the* catracha') private thoughts. Yet, in order to come to terms with my decision to share these narratives, I had to accept the importance of this artifact to my self-study because it was a kind of data that positioned me back into that moment in time. Denzin & Lincoln, 2005, state that "all social phenomena need to be studied in their historical context", therefore, the diary was a significant piece.

Other textual artifacts I used were personal letters. According to Hodder, (2003) letters are considered documents because they are prepared for personal use rather than official use. My Grandmother wrote to me between 1993 and 1996, which was the time I lived in El Paraiso and Tegucigalpa. I treasured her correspondences because each one provided a window into what was going on with my family and in in the community in my absence. Even though I was happy to be studying in another town, I remember missing my own, so the letters kept me in the loop of what was going on. Furthermore, her words also represented a conversation with my Grandmother that never stopped.

The additional textual artifacts were life stories that I wrote over the span of three years. According to Stake (2005) "any researchers would like to tell the whole story but of course

cannot; the whole story exceeds anyone's knowing and anyone's telling. Even those inclined to tell all, do as I did and "find strong the obligation to winnow and consolidate" (p. 456). My life's stories do not tell all, and are a consolidation of a few years of my life. I wrote a collection of three vignettes about my experiences in Honduras with the systems of education system, religion, and women's reproductive rights from 1977 to 1998.

In the first vignette, I described my educational experience in Honduras. I began describing primary education and attending the school in my community. Then, I continued with my middle school attendance at *El Instituto Canada* in Peña Blanca. I followed with the teacher's school in El Paraiso, and finished it with my undergraduate experience at the Universidad Pedagógica Nacional in Tegucigalpa.

In the second vignette, I explained my religious background as a participant, non-participant and bystander with religion. This story only covered my time living in La Guama because after I moved, I rarely attended Church at other places, and my experiences with religion seemed to only impact me there.

In the last vignette, I relayed my experiences between the late 80s and early 90s with women's reproductive rights, specifically when ASHONPLAFA came to our town for the first time and my Grandmother was a Community Based Distributor. Most of my narrative in this vignette was accounts of what I saw, and a few experiences that affected me directly. It was dedicated more to share my Grandmother's work in the community, and my response to her work.

The goal with each textual artifact I chose was to find documents that enhanced my narratives and illuminated the context of my life in Honduras from the day I was born to the last year I lived in there. In order to fill any gaps in my narrative, I also collected photographs as

visual data: the springboards for a study and complement to textual artifacts (Chang, 2008). There were many instances when I had to use visual data to inspire my writings and/or to corroborate information. Denzin and Lincoln (2003) describe the important of photographs:

> These forms of visual representation constitute different ways of recording and documenting what passes as social life. Often called the mirror with a memory, photography takes the researcher into the everyday world . . .. Photos can be connected with through visual narratives, stories that connect images to first person accounts, and cultural stories that unfold through time and space. (pp. 50-51)

Unfortunately, I did not have that many photographs to collect; the ones I chose came from the missionaries in Tegucigalpa and the MU project, the local photographer T, and my own work.

Una Foto Dice Más: A *Testimonio* on Collecting Truth

Nobody had a camera in our area except for T who lived in the neighboring community of Santa Elena. T was a young man around 20 years old and 4' feet tall, which was about the same height when I was in sixth grade, so I know he was not taller than 5' feet. He had black hair and a big black mustache, but most of all he had a big ego. Some people called him *creido* [stuck up] because he did not talk to anyone in town.

T owned a motorcycle, which looked too big for him. My grandparents' house was at the bottom of a hill, so when he was coming back from another town, he would speed on his motorcycle very fast, so everyone could hear him approaching. I gossiped with my cousin that he was trying to make himself look good because he always had trouble going up the hill. I know a few times someone would help him push the motorcycle up.

T was the photographer of many communities: Santa Elena, Monteverde, Aguazul Sierra and Aguazul Rancho. He was not a professional photographer—he was simply the only one smart enough guy to buy a good camera and begin a picture business. By then, people were receiving more pictures from relatives in the United States and the same relatives were asking for pictures back. It was the perfect time for him to begin his business, which by the late 80s was booming.

T was the photographer for weddings, birthdays, baptisms, parties, etc. He was the first to capture life in our communities. His business worked this way: If you needed pictures, you made a verbal agreement with him based on questions like: how many pictures do you want? What kinds of poses are you going to do? How many copies? Which day? Who was going to be in the pictures? What time? Once T took the pictures, he traveled to San Pedro Sula to develop them. So the process would take at least a month because he waited until the roll of film was full.

Once the pictures were developed he would charge one price per picture, and you were obligated to buy all of them, regardless of whether they were good or not. T's lack of professional training, combined with the pre-digital era, meant that many times people were missing heads, arms, feet, sleeping in the pictures, or just in awkward positions. However, it did not matter to him; you were obligated to buy them. If you didn't, T would remove you from his client list, and you were never to ask him to take photos again. Nobody made T mad because nobody wanted to go to the city to get pictures taken; if you wanted pictures, T was your photographer.

A few years later G, a missionary, brought me a camera. He saw how I really enjoyed creating images with his camera so the next year he visited, he brought me a camera as a gift. I began to use it, and collect rolls of film. T was not happy with me, and he refused to tell me

where he developed prints because he thought I was going to take over his business. In a way I did—I did not ask him to take my photograph anymore because I began to take my own. I used the camera a lot, and I began to capture my life as a young woman in the rural town. My pictures were more spontaneous than the ones T took. Mine were more about everyday existence than a pretend pose behind a planned scene. My pictures were in the river, the backyard, and on my grandparents' land. They began to represent real encounters in the community from my own perspective, which was very empowering.

The last piece I gathered was my Grandmother's *testimonio,* using interview as the data collection technique. Her dialogue helped me to corroborate assertions, obtain forgotten information, remember new knowledge, and understand other's perspective of self, (Chang, 2008). Due to the nature of *testimonio,* the questions I employed for the interview served only as a conversational guide. It was an unstructured interview, so it had more of the characteristics of an oral history, which has become a popular technique among feminists; however, it is not a new concept and dates to ancient times (Denzin & Lincoln, 2003). In Honduras, oral history has been part of our society as a way of preserving cultural knowledge. This cultural knowledge is disseminated via *pláticas* [conversations] as described above during our *pláticas familiares* [family conversations]. It was very important to recognize that when my Grandmother was sharing her stories, she was also sharing her *sabiduría* [wisdom], an ancient tradition that is still alive in our culture.

Collecting my Grandmother's *Testimonios*

Collecting my Grandmother's *testimonios* allowed me to place her as the protagonist of the narrative, which offers us the opportunity to challenge the marginalizing but dominant forms of representation and power in an effort to reclaim the spaces we occupy as our own. *Testimonio*

is decentered; its discourse runs at the margins of traditionalist research. This decentralized position is an additional, powerful argument for its use by the subversive person who challenges the *status quo.*

As a result of an initial travel visa inquiry, when we found out that the process was going to take longer than we expected, I decided to conduct my Grandmother's interviews via phone. Saldivar-Hull (2000) validates the concept of non-traditional research spaces that do not look like conventional spaces of traditional research: they create a more holistic space, *un espacio para una plática de corazón a corazón* [a space for heart to heart conversation]. My Grandmother and I already had a routine of speaking by phone every Sunday, so conducting the interviews in this way was not disruptive; instead, it provided an extension to our weekly routine.

Following *testimonio,* the first step was to ask my Grandmother to tell her personal story, just like any other *plática*, so she began sharing about her life in Honduras from child to adulthood. However, just because the questions were lineal, her narrative was not. Traditionally, oral history is a collective process, of gathering accounts of family, community and country; therefore it is always a very inclusive narrative. My Grandmother's developed the same way, as a circular description filled with different people, cultures, and communities. During her retelling, she went back and forth, reflecting upon and analyzing her own memoir. Delgado-Bernal (1998) explains that it is common for participants to produce and scrutinize their own knowledge.

I interviewed my Grandmother three times, covering each of the three themes: her educational experience, faith, and involvement as a community activist, in particular for women's reproductive rights. I recorded each of the interviews and later transcribed them, translating from Spanish to English. In is imperative to note that even though I had scheduled the

interviews, my Grandmother would call me during different times to reiterate or correct something she had shared during the interview—mostly amending dates, names of places, or people. These clarifications came after she had shared *nuestras pláticas* [our conversations] with my Grandfather or mother, and they would correct a detail, so she would feel compelled to do the same. This action served her as part of the second step of the process, which was the corroboration of her *testimonio*: by calling me right away to remove, add or edit information, we both were corroborating on her narrative.

Once all the chronicles were changed to their final English format, I conducted reversed translation, where I transmuted her final *testimonio* from English to Spanish. The purpose of this extra step was to make sure that when I converted her narrative from Spanish to English, there were not elements lost in translation. The final Spanish translation was the one that I used to corroborate with her on the final *testimonios*. We discussed the content and themes, and then reflected on each of them. The process was once again recorded, and I wrote memos containing new information. This step was very important to the process because the final transcript of each *testimonio* is what is included in this dissertation.

Researcher's Roles and Limitations

I recognize that by being away from Honduras for seventeen years, symbolic aspects of the Honduran culture position me at the margins of it. My perceptions have changed over time, and what my Grandmother conceives of as normal may no longer be standard for me. In addition, I am aware that I bring bias to this study because I am using it for my own liberation. In terms of my own narrative, I recognize that being away for so long from Honduras also requires me to be more descriptive. Burgos-Debray (1984), agrees, and during her interview with Rigoberta Menchú in her Argentinian home, she gave Menchú more reasons to be more colorful

in her accounts. My experience of writing away from Honduras in the United States obligates me to be more vivid so the reader is able to understand the context that each of our narratives come from.

Data Analysis

In qualitative research, data analysis is an inductive and emergent process, an open ended and creative act (Lofland & Lofland, 1995). The textual artifacts I collected were free-flowing and on par with the holistic approach of this study. First, my life stories were the result of free thinking, or reflecting on my experiences living in Honduras. Secondly, the interview my Grandmother had open ended questions so she could feel free sharing her experiences without interruption, as well as to maintain a natural approach to the conversation.

The moment I wrote the timeline with important life events, I could see clearly that three themes continued to emerge: education, religion and women's reproductive rights, and decided to carry on with the study based on those themes. Ryan and Bernard (2003), explain that investigators can identify themes early on in the process, and the themes can recur more in the text itself. Consequently, I wrote the three life stories for each theme, which as a result of the data analysis, kept pointing to the need to use a thematic analysis of the text. Ellis (2004) defines thematic analysis as treating stories as data and using analysis to arrive at themes that illuminate the content and hold across stories (p. 196).

Additionally, in order for me to code the information, I followed Charmaz's (2010) guide for constructing grounded theory. This process produced an overwhelming number of codes that became difficult to organize and direct by hand, and as a result I used Atlas.ti, a qualitative software that allows the researcher to manage more effectively the amount of data collected.

CHAPTER SIX: THE SUBVERSIVE VOICE OF A CATRACHA

"Lola" No Va a la Escuela: A *Testimonio* About a *Campesina*

When my Grandmother was a child her siblings called her Lola, but nobody outside her immediate family did it. So, just like my childhood name was "Yami", my Grandmother had a childhood name who everyone use. I became aware of her nickname later in life when one of her sisters was sharing a childhood story about them living in another town, and she used the name "Lola". Lola's childhood was a very sad one. She will be the first to admit her painful memories. She always begins with:

Para mi, mi niñez es como dicen, como verdaderamente no debe ser [for me my childhood was like people would say it is not supposed to be].

My Grandmother T. was born in Mercedes de Oriente, a rural community in the western part of the country. She was the second of nine children and grew up in a single-mother household. Her father was a *mujeriego* [womanizer] who abandoned the family when she was only seven years old. So in order for her mother to be able to provide for the nine children she was left with, my Grandmother became the primary care taker of her own brothers and sisters. My Grandmother also worked as a seamstresses, and c*ampesina* alongside her mother.

During the day, my great-Grandmother worked in the fields harvesting maize and beans, and at night, she toiled making clothes. The constant labor did not allow her time to care for her children, so it became my Grandmother's responsibility to look after them. When my Grandmother's chores were finished, she also helped her mother sewing apparel. Additionally, my Grandmother's responsibilities were not limited to the home, and she told me that when there were no orders for garments, she would harvest in the fields with her mother, or milk cows for her Grandfather, so they could have milk to drink. Their work was constant, and that is why she

always begins by telling me that she did not have a childhood. She believes that if she would have had a father, she would have had a different childhood to remember.

I wanted to know why she was working so hard since she was the third in line and not the first-born. "What about her older sisters?" I wondered, since it was customary in rural areas for the eldest child to take care of the younger ones. She explained me that her oldest sister was already married with three children, and the next sister refused to help. By default it became my Grandmother's responsibility to take care of her siblings full time when her father abandoned them.

Grandmother tells me that she enjoyed working with her mother because it made her feel useful. She knew how difficult it was for her mother to be single, so contributing to the household made her feel helpful.

> *Yo ayudándole a ella en la costura en la madrugada, hasta la madrugada a ver que podía. Yo haciendo, lo que dicen, ojales en los ruedos de los pantalones, porque ella costuraba de varón. Para la navidad, para el quince de septiembre y para días especiales así. O, antes se acostumbraba que cuando una persona muria, se le hacia lo que dicen, mortaja. Un traje, entonces había que costurar a media noche a veces. Yo haciendo con la aguja, con la mano, pegando los botones, porque antes no se usaba zipper, era botón. Y yo eso hacía con mi mamá. Hasta a veces hasta la una o dos de la mañana. A veces hacíamos trabajos para las fiestas. Las fiestas en nuestros pueblos eran de segura desvelada porque tenía que ser vestidos, trajes, de todo. Y ese es el trabajo de niño pues, porque no podía ir a la agarrar la máquina.*

> [I helped her making clothes until dawn, until dawn to see what we could do. I sewed buttons, the ends of trousers, because she sewed for men. For Christmas, for September fifteenth, and for special days. In the old days it was customary that when someone died, you would purchase a shroud. An outfit that needed to be sewed in the middle of the night. I would sew by hand, sewing buttons because there were not zippers back then, it was buttons. That was what I did with my mom. Sometimes until one and two in the morning. Sometimes we did outfits for the parties too. When there were parties in the village it was for sure that we were not going to sleep all night because we need to make fancy dresses, outfits, and everything. And that was my childhood job because I could not use the sewing machine] (T. Zavala, personal communication, December 12, 2015).

Then, a different tragedy arrived in my Grandmother's life and she recalls this incident with great sadness. Her older sister was murdered by her husband. They had three children and were pregnant with the fourth child. Everyone was aware of the violence she was subjected to, but nobody could do anything. One day her husband beat her so badly that she died from it. Nobody in the community did anything, life continued as usual. The children were divided among paternal family members, my Great Grandmother was already struggling to feed her own children, it was impossible for her to take care of four more.

I wish this were the only tragedy my Grandmother experienced, but eventually her brothers were also murdered during different times in her life, each of them were affected by the violence in the rural communities where they lived, and by the time I was fifteen, her last brother had been killed.

Schooling was not a priority for rural living. My Grandmother attended sporadically, but her primary duties were to take care of her siblings, so getting an education did not take precedence, as it wasn't relevant to rural life. Yet, among all her responsibilities and disadvantages, she was the only one of all her siblings who finished third grade (the highest the local school offered), which demonstrates her early determination to succeed. She was not able to continue to fourth grade because she would have had to travel to another town that was very far away from her home. My Grandmother said that distance was not the issue, but they were very poor, and she needed to help her mother because while her mother was working in the field, the whole family depended upon her being in charge of the house.

Once my Grandmother became of marrying age, she ran away with my Grandfather at 16, around the same age her mother and Grandmother did too. My great Grandmother was not happy about it: she was alone now and had lost not only a daughter but also her right-hand woman. However, according to the cycle of life in the rural area, it was my Grandmother's turn to start her own family. The marriage was not a big event: after they ran away, my Grandmother's new father in law sent a priest to get them married under Catholic customs—it was a requirement for them, most a cultural tradition to do things right.

My Grandmother married my Grandfather who had lots of siblings (seven brothers and one sister), and who was also poor. His family worked in the *campo* [fields] as *campesinos* [peasants] and once they were married, he was supposed to get a piece of land for to harvest alone (this was customary in the rural areas); however, due to family conflicts, my Grandfather was left out of that tradition, and he had to migrate someplace else to find an area to cultivate. It is then that they made the decision to move to Olancho, one of the most forgotten areas in the country.

Life in Olancho for my Grandmother was very difficult, and after she gave birth to my mother, my Grandfather decided that married life was not for him and he deserted her. My Grandmother was abandoned by another man, and became a single mother just like her mother did.

Only this time circumstances were different: she had only one child, and she had soil where she could plant and produce maize and beans. My Grandmother has never been ashamed of that period in her life; to the contrary, she has retold that story to me so many times that I have concluded it was a period that empowered her and liberated her. It was her first *mujer liberada* experience. My Grandfather left her in a perilous state, without money and protection. Yet, to his surprise, my Grandmother turned her harvest into a pig, a pig into tamales, tamales into money, and part of that money into a roof over her *choza* [shack].

My Grandmother does not deny it was a traumatic occurrence that she had to overcome. What made it more difficult was that my Grandfather did not go too far, so she was aware of what he was up to all the time. Also, as a young couple, my grandparents had made the commitment to provide for my Grandfather's younger brother, so after he left, my Grandmother was still responsible for that one more mouth to feed. Their separation only lasted one year and a half before my Grandfather returned, asking for forgiveness, and my Grandmother took him back. This experience has always been a point of embarrassment for my Grandfather, so when my Grandmother shares this story, she always does it when he is not around so he does not feel humiliated by his mistake of leaving her.

Once they moved back in together, their lives continued, and they moved to a different town named Rio Tinto, and later to Catacamas. My Grandfather found a job at a lumberyard where he met a Christian couple looking for a nanny. The job was offered to my Grandmother

who could bring her own child (my mother) and take care of the other children. My Grandmother tells me they were in so much need that they saw it as a blessing. they both were providing for the family, and my Grandmother felt *liberada*, because she was also contributing economically for the family.

Reflection and Analysis.

When I asked her to identify any recurring themes in the *testimonio* my Grandmother identified the following:

- Loss of her childhood
- Her admiration for her mother
- Identifying her mother as brave
- The need to self-sacrifice and save her family
- The acute poverty she grew up in
- Developing sisterhoods
- Continual informal education
- Following cultural customs
- Experiencing tragedy
- Being sad
- Always forgiving, yet reminding others of her loss of respect for them
- Eagerness to receive formal education
- Feeling honest in all levels
- Her first liberated moment

During the discussion of the first narrative, my Grandmother acknowledged that due to her acute poverty, she was not able to do things that abided by her cultural customs. She felt that

the difficult situations and tragedies in her life obligated her to become responsible at an early age, and to avoid depending on anybody. At the same time, her self-sacrificing character just became the norm—a fact of life. It is really hard for me not to feel my Grandmother's pain and sadness, even though she tries to cover it. The more we conversed, the more I was able to understand her resilient mind and attitude towards life. My heart really hurts when I review my notes and read all the tragedies she experienced both at a young age and later in life. Her reflections are full of wisdom, she reminds me of her self-sacrifice with questions like *¿Qué iba a hacer yo?* [What was I going to do?], *porque llorar* [why cry?] Her acknowledgment of the situations she was in did not paralyze her movement toward changing her current situation to a better one. This attitude continues to be consistent today.

"Lola" No es Católica: A *Testimonio* about Changing Ideology

My Grandmother practiced Catholicism during her younger years. The first time she heard about the evangelical church was when my Grandfather returned and asked her for forgiveness after he had abandoned her for a year. *Buscó a Dios* [he found God] she tells me. He was a changed man, so she forgave him. She did not convert to Protestantism right away; in fact, she became cautious of my Grandfather's newfound religion. She became more interested when they moved to a different town for work.

> *Él me decía que fuéramos a la iglesia pero yo no. Yo le dije cuando él me habló, yo le dije no. Hasta que yo aprenda a leer y hasta que aprenda bien a entender que es lo que está pasando entonces sí* [he would tell me to go to church and I did not want to. I told him, until I am able to read and understand well what is going on I will attend] (T. Zavala, personal communication, December 10, 2015).

She renounced to Catholicism once she moved to Catacámas. She believed that the bible aligned more to what she wanted to follow. The lumber mill that my Grandfather worked at was owned by a Christian man who shared with my Grandfather that his pastor needed a nanny. The revelation turned into a job offer for my Grandmother, which she took.

> *Entonces cuando yo empecé a leer la biblia, entonces yo empecé a entender y vine a Catacámas a cuidar los niños del pastor, a L, a R, a M y a E . . . entonces, mientras se ponían a descansar los niños para el para el culto en la noche yo me ponía a leer, porque yo tenía una biblia. Y entonces fui cuando yo decidí que en realidad, leyendo la biblia, ni otro libro, ni nada, ni nadie que me dijera, porque leyendo la biblia yo entendía . . . Déjeme que yo me voy a convencer. Y como esas cosas son voluntarias, ¿verdad?* [So then, when I began reading the bible, I began to understand. Once I moved to Catacámas to take care of the pastor's three children, L, R, and M, as well as my child E . . . so while they rested, I read because I had a bible. It is there where I decided that in reality, I was reading it, understanding and nobody telling me. I told E once, let me convince myself, those things are voluntary] (T. Zavala, personal communication, December 10, 2015).

My Grandmother worked for the couple as a nanny and cook, while my Grandfather worked in the mill. They both attended church and soon were offered new jobs in the city, working for the missionaries. My grandparents were not chosen because they were Christians; my Grandmother states that they were hired because they only had one child, which would facilitate their work availability. Once they moved to the *instituto Biblico*, their religious affiliation was established, they became Protestants, and everyone knew it. My great Grandmother also converted to Protestantism. When my Grandmother visited her, the

missionaries would send Christian literature to distribute in the community. Sometimes my Grandmother organized fellowship times for the community during the length of her visit. Here, she describes my great Grandmother's change of religion:

> *Entonces de fui una vez a tener una clase de los niños americanos, ellos me escogieron a mí para eso, y entonces yo fui. Cuando mi mamá dijo, no. Pero era la segunda vez que yo fui, ella admitió y entonces ella, me dijo que le dejara una biblia. Y yo andaba una biblia, le dejé la biblia. Y ella leyendo, sin que nadie le dijera, ella busco a Dios. El día que yo di la clases de niños que fue de Daniel. Entonces ella dijo que si, que ella tenía que aceptar también. Y fue cuando ella aceptó.* [The missionaries had given me the opportunity to do bible school with the American kids. Therefore, when I went to see my mother, she said no (to accepting Jesus). But, the second time I went she accepted that he was true and I left her a bible for her to read. She read it on her own, nobody told her to accept, she did it on her own. That day I gave a lesson on the story of Daniel. Then, she said yes, she was going to accept Jesus too. It was when she accepted] (T. Zavala, personal communication, December 10, 2015).

My Grandmother's Christianity was questioned when she began to work as a distributor for ASHONPLAFA; however, it dissipated soon because evangelicals tried to appear more progressive next to Catholic followers. After working with the missionaries, she continued to practice Protestantism, and she does to this day but her affiliation with the church did not seem to stop her from her social engagement in the community.

Reflection and Analysis.

When I asked her to identify any recurring themes in this *testimonio* my Grandmother identified the following:

- Becoming Christian on her own terms
- Maintaining her independence
- Upholding her Christian faith
- Being loyal
- Being truthful
- Keeping promises
- Continuing to educate herself on her own terms

During the discussion of this *testimonio*, my Grandmother reminded me that forgiveness is necessary, but respect needs to be earned, and in her case, the abandonment by my Grandfather made her lose respect for him, which he was never able to fully recuperate. I reflected that she was ahead of her time by reacting differently than most women would have. In the modern day, I would choose not to forgive my spouse. She explained that she took him back because she refused to give my mother another father. We identify together that growing up helping her mother prepared my Grandmother for the second abandonment. At the same time, this experience was paramount to her change into a liberated woman. From then on, she made the decisions, and she did so on her own terms, and whether my Grandfather liked them or not, she held her ground. While considering, she asked me: *Muy caprichuda esta mujer ¿verdad?*[too stubborn this woman, right?]— to which I responded, *rebelde* [rebel].

Nace un Agente de Cambio: A *Testimonio* About Agency

Access to birth control was not something that my Grandmother grew up with. Her mother gave birth to nine children—six girls, and three boys. The only access to birth control came in the name of *Mejoral* and women believed that, as a pain and fever reducer with acetaminophen as the main ingredient, it also carried ingredients to prevent a pregnancy. My great Grandmother never used birth control. First, there was not access, and second, if there was access, she was so poor that contraceptives were not something on her grocery list.

My Grandmother got married at sixteen years old, and gave birth to my mother nine months later. My Grandfather's abandonment right after gave my Grandmother almost two years without pregnancy. This was something unusual for a rural woman. She explains:

> *Yo no entiendo porque…. Yo tenía miedo de salir embarazada. Porque tenia miedo de salir embarazada porque como Don E me dejó casi dos años, entonces como me dejara a mi sola. Yo tenía miedo de salir embarazada y yo creo que el miedo, tal vez el miedo me hacía… ya cuando él regresó a la casa, yo tenía miedo de salir embarazada. Porque cuando ya llegó a la casa, B me dijo, mi hermano no la quiere, él que la quiere la quiere embarazar otra vez. Bueno, entonces yo le dije, bueno pero yo voy a tener de él, porque él es mi esposo y no le quiero poner otro papá a mi hija. Y ya estuve ocho años sin tener, de no tener hijos.* [I don't understand why . . . I was scared to get pregnant because Don E left me for almost two years. I was scared to get pregnant, when he returned I was scared to get pregnant. B (E's brother) scolded me, my brother does not love you, what he wants is to get you pregnant again. Well, I told him—but at least I will get pregnant by him, he is my husband, and I don't want to give my daughter another

father. Then, eight years passed without me being able to get pregnant] (T. Zavala, personal communication, December 10, 2015).

The first time my Grandmother was faced with the dilemma of how to answer reproductive questions was when my mother, at six years old, asked her where kids came from in front of Miss Frances, the director of the mission. My Grandmother recollects her shock, and her lack of words to answer my mother's question. Miss Frances got angry at her, and suggested to my Grandmother to find an answer to my mother's question, yet, *in a prudent way*. My Grandmother promised to respond, and said she was going to find a book; however, due to the lack of literature about reproduction, she was never able to find one. Miss Frances insisted to my Grandmother that it was her responsibility to be ready for these types of questions. Around the same time, there was a women's conference going on at the biblical institute and one night they screened a movie about birth. My mother sneaked in to the screening, and ended up watching the film. Late that night, my mother approached my Grandmother to tell her that she now knew where babies came from. While my Grandmother missed the opportunity to answer my mother's question, she began to attend sessions about anatomy at the institute. These workshops were nothing sophisticated that discussed the use of contraceptives—they were more for married women to learn about their bodies.

The next time my Grandmother was faced with a reproductive question, she felt ready. She was living in La Guama, and the Asociación Hondureña de Planificación Familiar (ASHOPLAFA) was surveying members of the area for a community based distributor who could educate local women about reproductive rights and contraceptives. My Grandmother's name was mentioned and the association approached her for the job.

> *Cuando yo vine de Tegucigalpa aquí la comunidad. Aquí en la comunidad no habían gentes, era poquita la gente y sin nada de experiencia entonces vino una se llamaba M. Y me dijo que quería poner puesto para . . .de planificación, entonces yo le dije que si porque yo quería trabajar, porque yo quería hacer algo diferente. Y entonces me trajo el puesto, me explicó, me dio una charla y de allí me llevaron al Parador a darnos la charla para educarnos y me exigió ella que tenía que estudiar porque yo no había ni terminado la primaria. Para que tuviera mejor crédito tenía que estudiar y por eso puse a estudiar.* [When I came from Tegucigalpa, here to the community, there were not that many people in the community. There were a small number of people in the community without any experience. A woman named M came and told me she wanted to establish a site for the distribution of contraceptives. Then I told her yes because I wanted to work]. (T. Zavala, personal communication, December 10, 2015).

After my grandparents moved to La Guama, my Grandfather continued to work for the missionaries, so he would come home only a few weekends during the month. My Grandmother found herself in a poor community without any jobs to offer, so for her it was a great opportunity to become a distributor. Her decision created conflict with her husband, her church, and her community. My Grandfather accused her of promoting prostitution, and the church and community accused her of killing babies. She did not back down, but instead she continued to attend workshops given by ASHONPLAFA.

M, my Grandmother's supervisor became involved, and gave my Grandfather a lecture about the facts of what she was doing. My Grandfather then changed his mind and helped my Grandmother sell contraceptives when she was not at home.

My Grandmother was already very involved in the community, but being a distributor created a different type of involvement, bringing other responsibilities as a counselor, nurse, educator, and mentor, among other roles. At the same time, she also suffered a lot of criticism, against which, in time, she created a shield to protect herself from some of the hate she received. It never stopped her, and she ran the distribution center for fourteen years, until the government once again decided to take over.

For a woman of her generation, my Grandmother was very informed about the reproductive system and contraceptives. I grew up correctly learning about each topic related to women's reproductive rights. I was never uninformed about those topics. If I had a question, I asked my Grandmother, and she would answer with facts.

Reflection and Analysis.

When I asked her to identify any recurring themes in her *testimonio* my Grandmother identified:

- Continual informal education
- Rebellious attitude about the facts
- The importance of having other women as support
- Being a community advocate
- Becoming more liberated
- Creating relationships with other women for the same cause
- Acknowledging that experiences diversified her

During the discussion of this *testimonio* my Grandmother identified how the Church impeded the progress of women, and this demonstrates that while she is true to her faith, she also knows that religion has its flaws. She told me that her rebellious attitudes were paired with facts.

For example, when people accused her of killing babies, she would respond with facts about birth control, which were difficult to refute. *A mi no me daba preocupación* [it did not worry me—she added, letting me know how she felt when people accused her of doing wrong. Another point that we discussed was the fact that by working with ASHONPLAFA, she had the opportunity to collaborate with other women from all over the country, and of different religious backgrounds—something that she would not have otherwise done, and from which, by default, I also benefited.

Tying the *Trenza*

During these steps, both my Grandmother and I agreed on the different characteristics that be found to really speak about her lived experiences as a woman.

- Loss of her childhood
- Her admiration for her mother
- Identifying her mother as brave
- The need to self-sacrifice and save her family
- The acute poverty she grew up in
- Developing sisterhoods
- Continual informal education
- Following cultural customs
- Experiencing Tragedy
- Being sad
- Always forgiving, yet reminding others of her loss of respect for them
- Eagerness to receive formal education
- Feeling honest at all levels

- Her first liberated moment
- Becoming Christian on her own terms
- Maintaining her independence
- Upholding her Christian faith
- Being loyal
- Being truthful
- Keeping promises
- Continuing to educate herself on her own terms
- Continual informal education
- Rebelling against mischaracterizations of her work by using facts
- The importance of having other women for support
- Being a community advocate
- Becoming more liberated
- Creating relationships with other women working for the same cause
- Acknowledging that experience diversified her

Her characteristics demonstrated internal and external factors derived from social and physical lived experiences that I will discuss in the next chapter in conjunction with the characteristics from my own narrative.

CHAPTER SEVEN: DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

Feminism is not about making women stronger. Women are already strong. It's about changing the way the world perceived that strength.

-G.D. Anderson-

Introduction

The purpose of this study was for me to understand my feminist journey from a *mujer liberada* in rural Honduras to creating a space for my voice in Western academia. During the exploratory process of this study, I discovered that in order for it to be complete, I must necessarily include my Grandmother's voice. The process began by crafting room for her narrative to be included and by placing myself in the Honduran context of the 80s with a historical background of events epochal to my journey. I also include an outsider's perspective when I step out and let my Grandmother relay her *testimonios*. As a result of this process, I discovered a *catracha's* narrative from rural Honduras that helped me unearth the undiscovered narrative of a *mujer liberada* who had carried *trenzas* with *catrach*aness that represented her journey.

Taking that into account, along with what I discovered up to now, I state that my intentions were for the reader to understand that my catracha*ness* upbringing had been forgotten, and my narrative dominated by Western perspectives and a male-dominated society that drove me to accept someone I was not. Therefore, with this study I used *testimonio* to describe how my politics aspire to radicalization (because it is here where the *mujer liberada* will speak) and democracy throughout this study that I create a space for fluid conversation among subversive women who aspire to social change and equality.

In this chapter, I will be answering the research questions that guided the study. This chapter is organized as follows: first, I discuss the themes I found during this study, second, I revisit each of the questions and answer them, and third, I debate the theoretical implications, methodology, practice, and recommendations for future research. Finally, I reflect on the study and share my conclusions.

I began this study with three questions:

1. How did my Grandmother influence my feminist views?
2. Does my Grandmother consider herself a feminist woman?
3. How does the concept of Mestiza consciousness fit in the narrative of a rural feminist woman?

There were many instances during the process of this study that I did not anticipate, and which surprised me. I was aware that my research questions were a recipe for opening something that was going to challenge me. I had to go back to my roots, open happy and painful memories, and be ready for information that I did not previously know. Writing my *testimonios* was one of the most difficult steps in the process because there were experiences that I did not want to remember. Conversely, I was eager to have a *plática* with my Grandmother. I wanted to hear her *testimonios* because they were going to give me the opportunity to really hear in detail her experiences as a rural woman in Honduras.

Through my childhood, I had heard her stories, but I only saw them as sharing her life experiences like any woman of her generation would do, which was to use her personal understanding to spread her wisdom. This time was different—first, I arrived with a new perspective and the quest of finding myself through her. I had to listen carefully, code,

corroborate, discuss, and reflect on every single detail with her. To really braid and re-braid so I could present to the world our collective voices, and state our agencies.

During the coding process, I discovered that my Grandmother's catracha*ness* was created in layers of identity. The first demonstrated the context of Honduran society, and she used this layer to hide the second, which demonstrated her emancipated identity. In the first layer, I found "self-sacrifice," "loyalty," "faithfulness," "credibility," and "obedience." In the second layer I found "*mujer liberada,"* "rebellious," "realistic," "warrior," "smart," "self-didactic," "advocate," and "*comadre*." I will explain each of the themes and then discuss them in relation to the research questions.

First Layer of Catracha*ness*

Self-sacrifice.

Described as *marianismo*, the self-sacrifice of the rural woman is a recurring them in the narrative, and in all aspects of society. In my Grandmother's *testimonio*, self-sacrifice appeared when she described her responsibility at a young age to help her mother, in early adulthood taking back her husband so she did not bring a different father to her daughter, and waiting for everyone in her household to obtain an education before obtaining her own.

Loyalty.

Connected to self-sacrifice, my Grandmother continued to be loyal, in spite of all the injustices: she persisted in advocating for women's reproductive rights while attending the Church that condemned them and discriminated against her. She worked hard to support other individuals getting their educations while she was being denied one. She continued to practice religion, even though she understood that the ideology was wrong. She became a mother for her siblings when she had to.

Faithfulness.

This theme appeared not only in relation to religion, but also to personal relationships. My Grandmother truly gave her heart to her mother, my Grandfather, her daughter, and all the children whom she raised. Many of us left and came back to her life, and she was always there. Her faithfulness extended to women's reproductive rights, and even though it was a difficult task, she continued to be part of it.

Credibility.

My Grandmother has been *a mujer recta* [straight woman], which in the Honduran context means an honest woman—*A mi nadie me pisa la cola* [nobody steps on my tail], she tells me. What she means is that she has always been morally correct in life. As a gatekeeper of the community, she informs herself with facts, so that is why she is always the person we go to for information.

Obedience.

As a woman in a man's world, she was always aware that in order for her to get something done, she had to abide by certain cultural traditions. Staying married to my Grandfather also provided her credibility in the "macho" world.

Second Layer of Catracha*ness*

Mujer Liberada.

This theme appeared early in the study, it became important language and a definition that opened the space for conversation. We both used *mujer liberada* to describe a woman who does not accept cultural norms, but abides by tradition. For example, my Grandmother became very independent and did not rely on my Grandfather's decisions, but at the same time, she

continued to honor tradition by being a good wife and mother. Additionally, *una mujer liberada* is more of an emotional state because it is an invisible layer to the naked eye.

Rebellious.

The theme is connected to *mujer liberada*. My Grandmother constantly defines herself as a woman with rebellious spirit for a good cause. She justifies her disobedience by stating—*Yo soy rebelde para las cosas buenas* [I am rebellious for good things].

Disobedient.

Even though on the surface my Grandmother appears to be a woman who obeys her husband, in reality she does not. Despite my Grandfather's opposition to her getting involved in social movements, she continued to do it. She tells me that her insistence ended with my Grandfather supporting her.

Realistic.

My Grandmother is not a romantic about life. She constantly reminded me that because of her poverty she was not able to do anything. She surprised me by not saying *es la voluntad de Dios* [it's God's will]. To the contrary, she blames her poverty on the conditions of women, and the country at that time. When I asked her if she believed her mother would have been able to take birth control if it were available to her at that time, she responded—*No.* The Catholic Church would have not allowed it, and she was so disappointed by the lack of progress in the Church.

Warrior.

This theme appeared in her *testimonio* when she spoke about her mother's hard work. I also describe my Grandmother's hard effort too. She has been working hard since she was seven years old in order to be able to contribute, and to give everyone a better life.

Smart and Self-didactic.

This theme appeared during our discussions and her awareness of the socioeconomic and cultural status of the country. Since she was little, she immersed herself in informal education. For example, at age seven she was a seamstress, cook, took care of her siblings, planted, and harvested the land. These informal educational experiences were the result of a need for survival. Every chance she had, she continued to look for learning opportunities that would offer her opportunities for development.

Advocate.

The type of social engagement my Grandmother conducted was intentional activism. She did not go and protest in the streets of Honduras for national change. To the contrary, she used her kitchen as her political platform. Engaging directly with women in the community, she created more effective transformation.

Comadre.

During various events in my Grandmother's life, I was able to identify women who supported her when things were difficult. The concept of sisterhood that was comparable to the Spanish translation with a contextual and cultural meaning was the word *comadres*. In the Honduran culture, *comadre* stems from the Catholic faith, and translates to English as Godmother. To be a *comadre* is an honor that also brings responsibility. Behar (2015) defines it:

> The word means "co-mother," and anthropologists like to think of it as a form of spiritual kinship. Among comadres, there is acknowledgment of class differences and at the same time determination to go beyond those differences and find a common humanity (p.1).

My family did not practice Catholicism; yet, my Grandmother had catholic *comadres*, which led me to the question of whether it had to be affiliated with Catholicism. If this code appeared in narratives of "sisterhood," could my Grandmother have *comadres* without the being catholic? Anthropologists defined it as a form of spiritual kinship, which described the types of relationships my Grandmother had with other women. Her *comadres* were secular "sisters" whom she met via education or the Family Planning group, and who were pursuing the same liberation goal.

These themes explain why there is the misconception that rural women are not engaging in social activism. To the contrary, rural women continue to engage socially in their kitchens, my Grandmother's milk business was a clear example.

As I mentioned earlier, I began this study with three questions, which I will now answer:

Question One: How Did My Grandmother Influence My Feminist Views?

Figure 7. My Grandmother and me in 1978 at the Biblical Institute.

I designed this question with the purpose of discovering my journey as a feminist woman in Honduras. The question arose from my own doubts that my Grandmother had any influence on that development. In fact, I initially believed that my feminist growth was a result of Western academia, and not from lived experiences in Honduras. To my surprise, this study demonstrated the contrary. The picture that I am sharing above encompasses the relationship I developed with my Grandmother. As long as I can remember, she has always been part of my life. Any movement she was part of I also participated in. I watched, learned, shared her knowledge, and became an active participant. She continuously aspired toward a better community and her relationship with it was always deep.

I participated indirectly, by traveling with her to workshops and meetings. I met new people that I would not have been able to know. I also became educated about the root of the problems the community was facing, and learned about what I could to create change.

Figure 8. This picture shows my Grandmother, my great-Grandmother and me in front of our house. In the background to the top middle of the picture there is a green and white sign, which identifies Honduran Family Planning. This sign was nailed to our house as a way to let others know it was a distribution center.

The above picture is one clear example how my Grandmother influenced my feminist views. When it was taken, my Grandmother wanted the three of us to be proud of collaborating with ASHONPLAFA. She knew I was being teased at school because she had been accused of being a baby killer. With this picture, she captured for life the message to stand tall for what we believe.

Question Two: Does My Grandmother Consider Herself a Feminist Woman?

I designed this question to discover if Grandmother considered herself a feminist woman in the Honduran landscape and originally, I doubted she did. I found that the reason why I was not able to answer this question earlier was because I was not using the right language to define a feminist woman. I was using Western perspectives that did not have anything to do with the rural Honduran context. The change of narrative started when my Grandmother defined Miss Frances

as *mujer liberada*. Her definition sparked my curiosity over her understanding of the term. I knew all about Miss Frances. I grew up hearing about her all my life, so I was very informed about her relationship with my grandparents. What I did not know was that their realtinship was what would clarify my Grandmother's understanding of feminism. I had originally created a hostile environment where there was not space for a rural woman's narrative, so in order for me generate room for my Grandmother and I to have a heart to heart conversation, I had to discard my Western perspectives and go back to my roots.

Once I opened a space for my Grandmother's *testimonio*, I understood with clarity that her definition of feminism abided by the Honduran sociocultural context. Therefore, her explanation of being *una mujer liberada* only complies with her own context.

Question Three: How Does the Concept of Mestiza Consciousness Fit in the Narrative of a Rural Feminist Woman?

I designed that question to discover if *la conciencia Mestiza* applied to the rural context. In my original conception of the theory, I was quick to notice that it only applied to my process of conscientization. On the contrary, Mestiza consciousness applies to my Grandmother's experiences. In order for me to understand this concept rooted in a rural context, I had to define "mestiza" outside the racial definition by aligning it to Anzaldúa's and Perez's (2007; 2005) definitions. Both define "Mestiza consciousness" as a third element that is part of "self," and moves constantly and painfully because it breaks down the subject−object duality (Anzaldúa, 2007; Perez, 2005). If I see *la conciencia mestiza* as a transformative process that that maintains the politic born in the *mujer liberada*, then, my Grandmother is a rural woman who has done exactly that, she has been transforming, evolving as a an agent of change.

Theoretical Implications

This study contributes to feminist literature by providing an insight at the micro-level of Central American feminism. The research validates the journey rural women take to become agents of change and to *liberated women*. It also demonstrates the importance of creating spaces specific to the rural context and by doing so new narratives emerge. If researchers do not create space for influences and journeys imperative to the understanding of feminism in Central America, those voices become lost.

In addition, to my knowledge, this is the first *testimonio* written by a rural woman about rural feminism in Honduras that compiles the social and biological concepts that affect women in rural areas. Furthermore, to my knowledge, this is the first *testimonio written* by a Honduran granddaughter about the narrative of a Honduran Grandmother whose voice began to emerge in the late 1940s.

This study will be of incredible benefit to future researchers from rural areas who are looking for ways to maintain their own voices, and use research methodology that will create spaces to include contributors who are not familiar with Western methodology, and to speak their own truths.

In summary, I use *testimonio* as my way to subvert to the oppressive Western academia, and speak my truth about my personal experiences as a woman who grew up in rural Honduras, as well as to go back to my roots and recognize how my journey in Honduras made me the woman who I am now.

Limitations of this Study

The limitations in this study were:

1. This study focused only on feminists in rural Honduras, and did not include the *testimonios* of other Central American women.
2. I just included my Grandmother's *testimonio,* and I excluded my Grandfather's and mother's *testimonios*.
3. Due to the nature of the topic of the research, it was very difficult to be unbiased during the discussion of themes.
4. My role of researcher sometimes switched to a granddaughter's role because of cultural custom, and it was quite demanding sometimes to separate and be neutral in our relationship.

In spite of these limitations, and as a result of this research, I learned more in detail about my Grandmother while our relationship became stronger, and I provided the world an authentic voice of rural feminism.

For that, the authenticity of these *testimonios* will be judged by the product itself. My Grandmother's narrative and mine cannot be replicated, however, they will offer a general guide for conducting similar studies. These stories are our personal experiences, which I do not expect to be generalized; however, they can be used as a window into the feminist movement in rural Honduras, as well as a way to create a space for other Honduran women to record their journeys as new scholars.

Recommendations for Future Research

I recommend that future researchers:

1. Consider expanding the feminist literature of Central American countries by including the voices of the women themselves. Three examples of the success this brings are the works of Rigoberta Menchú from Guatemala, Elvia Alvarado from Honduras, and María Teresa Tula from El Salvador. Their *testimonios* aid new scholars like me in understanding our testimonial literature—the *testimonios* of rural women.
2. Conduct the same type of study with an urban woman who was/is a social activist during the same time my Grandmother was participating in the movement.
3. Create funding opportunities in Honduran institutions to support the use of non-Western methodologies for research purposes.

These recommendations are based on my personal struggles to conduct a non-Western study in a Western world.

Amarrando Trenza

I intended this dissertation to contribute to the literature of Third World Feminists, and in particular to the literature of the Honduran feminist movement. My desire for this contribution was personal because I wanted to share my Grandmother's story of advocacy in the country. At the same time, it was a way for me to subvert statements made by other scholars that after the 90s, Third World Feminism lost "its appeal" (Herr, 2014). If that was the case, I had to respond in two ways: first, fill in part the missing gap in Third World feminism with accounts from rural Honduras. Second, recognize that maybe it was true that Third World Feminism lost its appeal for new scholars, however, discover the reason why it happened.

This study did contribute to the research, and during my literature review, I discovered that the movement had evolved, in some cases began to appear in different forms. These waves did not have the same characteristics of the Western paradigm we were used to— i.e., *testimonios*, because they were aligned with the context of the movement. As I mentioned in this study, in Latin America the feminist movement was recorded with *testimonial* literature. Rigoberta Menchú, María Teresa de Tula and Elvia Alvarado (1984; 1195; 1987) built the canon by recording women's struggles in Latin America in their testimonial books. Their contribution to the Central American movement became a great base for new scholars like me who did not feel represented in Western feminist literature. I also found that women in Latin America continued to fight for a social status in a male-dominated society un/aware that the discourse about their movement had begun to lose its "the appeal."

While Honduran women were at the forefront of the fight, their movement was being deconstructed and reported by Western feminists who, with good intentions, were actually negating the opportunity for Third World feminists to tell their own stories. This disregard was also an issue and a point of criticism by feminist women of color who lived in the West, and Third World feminist scholars during the Second wave. They expressed their concerns about how the East and West had been in charge of informing the struggles of the *Other* and how problematic Western perspectives were because they did not follow cross-cultural methodology that embraced *a mujer liberada* [a liberated woman] from a developing country (Mathrani, 1997; Mohanty, 2003).

The conversation extended to women of color and lesbian scholars expanding their contributions to the second feminist wave from the 1960s on (Dicker and Piepmeier, 2003). Their voices contested White feminists' generalizations of the movement as a "White women's

movement" (Nicholson, 1997; Sandoval, 1998). White feminists, on the other hand, accused the new feminists of fragmenting the movement (Koyama, 2003). However, with the inclusion of diverse voices, the platform of the feminist movement began to change, and the conversations around women's equality shifted from a focus on personal problems to identifying the issues as social problems (Yu, 2011). Therefore, the common practice of stereotyping women's narrative as a personal, and transformed into a public discussion of social issues in the country.

According to Heer (2014), between the late 1970s and early 1980s there was criticism from women of color who lived in the West that focused on the implicit racism and imperialism of White feminists, and their inability to understand the complexity and layers of oppression Third World feminists faced. Influential Chicana scholars and U.S. Third World feminists Gloria Anzaldúa, Cherry Morága, Ana Castillo, Chela Sandoval and Norma Alarcón challenged Western feminism by implying "that women of color somehow exist in the interstices between the legitimatized categories of the social order" (Sandoval, 1998, p. 54). Some of their responses came in the form of a collection of stories, essays and poems in the publication *This Bridge Called my Back* (1983). These Chicana scholars gave voice to their authors by respecting their voices and experiences. Along with new forms of literature, these Chicanas scholars also created theories (theory in flesh) that represented the woman of color, her complexity, and layers of oppression. The movement could now be researched from a cross-cultural perspective (Castillo, Alarcón and Moraga, 1988; Anzaldúa, 2007).

The discussion of Western and Third World feminism transcended borders, and Indian scholars began to contribute to the discussion between the 1980s and 90s. Chandra Talpade Mohanty and Uma Narayan (2003;1997) were a few of the first scholars who challenged feminist women from the East and West. Their scholarly work was the canon of Third World Feminist

literature written by women who were currently living in developing countries. Mohanty (2003), an Indian scholar, challenged Western feminist's views about feminists from developing countries in her essay *"Under Western eyes: Feminist scholarships and colonial discourses*." In it, she criticized the monolithic views of Western feminists, and the idea that colonialism only happened politically, economically and socially while ignoring the less obvious discursive colonialism (Mohanty, 2003).

Mohanty's (2003) discussion was framed by three principles: (1) women are a category of analysis, (2) using methodologies that do not align to the context of the movement, and (3) the consequences for the previous two. Later on, Mohanty (2003) wrote a second essay and revisited her positions, discussing the context she was in when she wrote it, as well as answered some of the criticism, and misuse of her work by other academics. Either way, Mohanty's critique became a point of reference for women scholars who wanted to study feminism movements in developing countries.

Uman Narayan, an Indian theorist, wrote *Dislocating Cultures: Identities, traditions, and Third World Feminism* (1997). In it, she discussed how Western feminists quickly pointed to tradition as the source of oppression, and treating practices as integral parts of a culture, consequently, Western feminist have become themselves religious fundamental nationalists; she agreed with Mohanty's (2003) suggestion for Western feminists to find a balance when using feminist epistemology.

The State of Third World Feminist Today.

Even though Third World Feminist scholars from the U.S. and developing countries have expressed their concerns about Western epistemology, and have created methodologies to conduct adequate cross-cultural studies, the conversation of feminism about developing

countries, they continue to demonstrate a lack of understanding by women from the West. One example is the current Western perspective and concern about women's equality in Muslim countries where scholars explain that Western feminists continue to neglect "specific religious, cultural and traditional Arabic and Islamic notions of gender relations, historical, economical, geopolitical notions, specifically the history of colonialism" (Al-Sarrani and Alghamdi, p. 2, 2014). Muaddi Darraj (2003) explains:

> Much of this confusion and misunderstanding stems from the fact that Arab women generally live in third world countries, which are stereotyped as being 'backwards.' It is incomprehensible for many American feminist, for example, that Arab women could have independently develop a feminist consciousness. (p. 191)

The themes of women's agency and feminist consciousness have become intertwined with the issues of colonial power and Western dominance, and serve to frame discussion about women in transnational contexts (Mathrani, 1997). Moreover, as feminists, we need to expand ourselves and support other marginalized groups like transfeminists, who are also suffering from patriarchal binary systems (Koyama, 2003).

Testimonial Research as a Solution.

The new literature demonstrates that the feminist movement is evolving (Dicker and Piepmeier, 2003), but that there is still a disconnection between Western and Third World feminist movements concerning the priorities of the movement. While Western feminists are discussing machismo, or the veil as a form of oppression, women in Latin America and Arab countries are discussing how to overcome poverty, politic unrest, and neocolonialism. We need a collective effort to make a change. Since women of color were included in second wave

conversations, it is now the time to support and include scholars from other diverse backgrounds too. Third World feminist women from developing countries who are living in Western countries are still seen as emissaries, mirrors, and authentic insiders (Narayan, 1997), what hooks (1994) calls "native informants". Yes it is true that our desire to be honest contradicts with our caution of Western superiority and prejudice against our cultures (Nayaran, 1997). In the case of my study, this misconception is dangerous because with these testimonios, I do not intend to represent all women from Honduras. They are my Grandmother's and my perspectives of our experiences living there. In them, I speak from the heart about what is like to grow up with a *mujer liberada* in a period where not accounts were collected about that time. I discovered that the feminist fight in Honduras never stopped—on the contrary it continued to morph according to the political and social context of the country. Nayaran (1997) reminds us that:

> There is nothing inherently wrong about the project of giving an account of oneself—of one's specific location as speaker and thinker, of the complex experiences and perceptions and sense of life that fuels one's concerns, of the reasons, feelings and anxieties that texture one's position on an issue, of the values that inform one's considered judgement of things (Narayan, 1997, p. 396).

I will conclude by stating that women in Honduras have been conquering silently every moment, and I do not foresee them retreating from the fight. One purpose of this study was to demonstrate feminism at the micro-level. The process of transformation and the struggle of liberated women like my Grandmother were often are not part of the literature written by Western feminists. I wanted to give examples of how physical realities inspired social participation, self-reflection, and critical thought in a continual braiding and re-braiding process.

My Grandmother's *testimonio* shed light on the development of feminism in Honduras, but in particular on my own development: how women in the kitchen subvert oppressive environments while their granddaughters watch, and how their catracha*ness* has been formed by layers that are exposed and hidden to the naked eye because they have to maintain a hybrid duality, or a Mestiza consciousness state of being. I have now exposed my Grandmother's hidden layer, and demonstrated what a rural feminist woman really looks like. This study has now solidified my generative resistance, and my identitiy as a *mujer catracha* [catracha woman] who carries *a trenza* [braid]created by her catracha*ness*.

I began this study with a personal story that embodied my Grandmother's social activism in the country. Choosing that tale allowed me to share with the reader a glimpse of what a feminist woman from a rural area acts like. It taught me to not underestimate the history of feminism in the country, and how women like my Grandmother bloom under the worst circumstances, while they plant seeds for the next generation in order to beautify a harsh reality.

I would like to conclude this study by revealing that writing my Grandmother's and my *testimonios* was like asking T not to take any more pictures of me and my Grandmother. I became the photographer of our stories—I went back in time, and with this study showed what a *catracha* looks like, and how we proudly carry our catracha*ness*.

REFERENCES

Abbassi, J., & Lutjens, S. (2002). *Rereading women in Latin America and the Caribbean: The political economy of gender*. Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield.

Abbott, M. (2011). Distributing consciousness: Catalysis and impediments for Indigenous testimonio. Retrieved from http://ssp.ucr.edu/journal/volumes/volume5/michael_abbot_pdf_online.pdf

Abbott, M., & Luke, N. (2011). Local hierarchies and distributor (non) compliance: A case study of Community-Based distribution in rural North India. *Health Care for International*. *32*. 225-242. doi: 10.1080/07399332.2010.529217

Acker, A. (1988). *Honduras: The making of the banana republic.* Boston, MA: South End Press.

Alarcón, W., Cruz, C., Jackson, L. G., Prieto, L., & Rodriguez-Arroyo, S. (2011). Compartiendo nuestras historias: Five testimonios of schooling and survival. *Journal of Latinos and Education, 10*(4), 369-381. doi:10.1080/15348431.2011.605690

Alvarado, E. (1987). *Don't be afraid gringo: A Honduran woman speaks from the heart*. In M. Benjamin (Ed.). New York, NY: Harper and Row.

Anderson, J. (2003). Historia de los Baustistas. Casa Bautista Pubns (3).

Anzaldúa, G. (1987). *Borderlands La frontera: The new Mestiza.* San Francisco, CA: Aunt Lute Books.

Anzaldúa, G. (2007). *Borderlands La frontera: The new Mestiza.* In S. Saldívar-Hull (Ed). San Francisco, CA: Aunt Lute Books.

Arias, A. (2001). Authoring ethnicized subjects: Rigoberta Menchú and the performative production of the subaltern self. *Modern Language Association, 116*(1), 75-88.

Bartow, J. (2004). Essential subversions: Reading theory with Latin American women's testimonial discourse. In L. S. Maier & I. Dulfano (Eds.), *Woman as witness: Essays on testimonial literature by Latin American women* (pp. 47-62). New York: P. Lang.

Bernal, D.D., Burciaga, R., & Carmona, J. F. (2012).Chicana/Latina testimonios: Mapping the methodological, pedagogical and political. *Equity & Excellent in Education, 45*(3). 363-372. doi:10.1080/10665684.2012.698149

Beverley, J. (1991). Through all things modern: Second thoughts on testimonio. *Boundary 2: An International Journal of Literature and Culture, (18)*2, 1-21.

Beverley, J. (2004). *Testimonio: On the politics of truth*. Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press.

Moraga, C. & A. Castillo (Eds.), Este puente mi espalda (pp.35-41). San Francisco, CA: Ism Press, Inc.

Chang, H. (2008). *Autoethnography as method*. Walnut Creek, CA: Left Coast Press.

Cornelius, R. M., & Novak. J.A. (1983). Contraceptive avail- ability and use in five developing countries. *Studies in Family Planning* 14 *(12),* 302-317. doi: 10.2307/1965616

Creswell, J. (2008). *Educational Research: Planning, conducting, and evaluating quantitative and qualitative research* (Third ed.). Upper Saddle River, NJ: Pearson Prentice Hall.

Cruz, C. (2012). Making Curriculum from Scratch in an Urban Classroom. *Equity & Excellence in Education, 45*(3), 460-471. doi:10.1080/10665684.2012.698185

De Quesada, A. A. (1978). *Towards a cultural policy for Honduras* (pp. 1-73, Rep.). France: UNESCO.

Delgado, B., Burciaga, R., & Flores Carmona (2012). Chicana/Latina Testimonios: Mapping the Methodological, Pedagogical, and Political. *Equity & Excellence in Education*. *45*(3). 363-372. doi: 10.1080/10665684.2012.698149

Dulfano, I. (2004). Testimonio: Present predicaments and future forays. In L. S. Maier & I. Dulfano (Eds.), *Woman as witness: Essays on testimonial literature by Latin American women* (pp. 81-96). New York, NY: Peter Lang.

Ellis, C. (2004). *The ethnographic I: A methodological novel about autoethnography*. Walnut Creek, CA: Alta Mira Press.

Freire, P. (2004). *Pedagogy of Hope*. New York, NY: The Continuum International Publishing Group.

Freire, P. (1970). *Pedagogy of the oppressed*. New York, NY: The Continuum International Publishing Group.

Gugelberger, G. M. (Ed.). (1996). *The real thing: Testimonial discourse and Latin America*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press.

Herr, R. S. (2014). Reclaiming Third World Feminism: Or Why Transnational Feminism Needs Third World Feminism. *Meridians, 12*(1), 1-30. Retrieved from http://www.jstor.org/stable/10.2979/meridians.12.1.1?ref=search-gateway:d4162cb50acaec3d3df52b494601fb0c

Humphrey, C. (1997). *Honduras Handbook: Including the Bay Islands and Copan.* Chico, CA: Moon Travel Handbooks.

Hurtado, A. (2010). Theory in the flesh: Toward an endarkened epistemology. *International Journal of Qualitative Studies in Education, 16*(2), 215-225. doi: 10.1080/0951839032000060617

Kimball, G. (2012, March 4). How Third World feminist differs from First World feminism [Web blog post]. Retrieved from http://www.fem2pt0.com/2012/03/04/how-third-world-feminism-differs-from-first-world-feminism/

Kovach, M. [27KSKC]. (2013, October 28). *Margaret Kovach at the American Indigenous Research Conference, Oct 2013, Pablo, MT* [Video file]. Retrieved from https://youtu.be/ejkPjJo3aXE

Lofland & Lofland, L. (1995). *Analyzing social settings: A guide to qualitative observation and analysis*. Belmont, CA: Wadsworth Publishing Company.

La Belle, T. (1987) From Consciousness Raising to Popular Education in Latin America and the Caribbean. Comparative Education Review 31(2):201-217.

Lloyd, A. S. (1972). Freire, conscientization, and adult education. *Adult Education Quarterly, 23*(1), 3-20. doi:10.1177/074171367202300101

L.T.G. (1971). A microscomic view of the OAS: Honduras-El Salvador conflict. *Virginia Law Review, 57*(2), 291-314. Retrieved from http://www.jstor.org/stable/1072103

Maier, L. S. (2004). The case for and case history of women's testimonial literature in Latin America [Introduction]. In L. S. Maier & I. Dulfano (Eds.), *Woman as witness: Essays on testimonial literature by Latin American women* (pp. 2-17). New York: P. Lang.

McKelvey, C. (1999). Feminist organizations and grassroots democracy in Honduras. In J. M. Bystydzienski & J. Sekhon (Eds.), *Democratization and women's grassroots movements* (pp. 196-213). Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press.

McNicoll, (1992). Changing fertility patterns and policies in Third World. *Annual Review of Sociology, 18,* 85-108.

Mejía A. (1994). Demanding women's rights in the shadows of the military. In Küppers, G. Editor, *Compañeras* (pp.30-34). London: Latin American Bureau (Research and Action), Ltd.

Menchú, R. (1984). *I, Rigoberta Menchú: An Indian woman in Guatemala*. In E. Burgos-Debray (Ed.). London, UK: Verso.

Merriam, S. B., Caffarella, R. S., & Baumgartner, L. M. (2007). *Learning in adulthood: A comprehensive guide*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.

Mertens, D. M. (2010). *Research and evaluation in education and psychology: Integrating diversity with quantitative, qualitative, and mixed methods* (Third ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.

Mignolo, W. (2015). On subalterns and other agencies. *Postcolonial Studies, 8*(4), 381-407. doi: 10.1080/13688790500375082

Mohanty, C. T. (2003). *Feminism without borders: Decolonizing theory, practicing solidarity*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press.

Moraga, C. & Anzaldúa, G. (1983). *This bridge called my back: Writings by radical women of color*. New York, NY: Kitchen Table: Women of Color Press.

Moraga, C. & Castillo, A. (1988). *Este puente mi espada: Voces de mujeres tercermundistas en los Estados Unidos*. San Francisco, CA: Ism Press.

Pérez, E. (2005). Gloria Anzaldua la gran Mestiza theorist, writer, activist-scholar. *NWSA Journal, 2*(2), 1-10. doi: 10.1353/nwsa.2005.0038

Pérez Huber, L. (2009). Disrupting apartheid of knowledge: *testimonio* as methodology in Latina/o critical race research in education. *International Journal of Qualitative Studies in Education*. 22*(6),* 639-654. DOI: 10.1080/09518390903333863

Reyes, K. B., & Rodríguez, J. E. (2012). Testimonio: Origins, terms, and resources. *Equity & Excellence in Education, 45*(3), 525-538. doi:10.1080/10665684.2012.698571

Saldivar-Hull, S. (2000) *Feminism on the border: Chicanas gender, politics and literature*. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press.

Shepherd, F. M. (1993). Church and State in Honduras and Nicaragua Prior to 1979. *Sociology of Religion*. *54*(3). 277-293.

Spivak, G. (1988). Can the subaltern speak? In C. Nelson & L. Grossberg (Eds.), *Marxism and the interpretation of culture* (pp. 271-278). Urbana, IL: University of Illinois Press.

Stephen, L. (1995). La política y práctica de la literatura testimonial. In M. T. Tula (Author) & L. Stephen (Ed.), *Este es mi testimonio* (pp. 235-250). Boston, MA: South End Press.

Stillwell Cole, A. (1893). *Sin Days on the Hurricane Deck of a Mule-An Account of a Journey Made on Mule Back in Honduras, -C.C. in August, 1891*. New York, NY: The Knickerbocker Press.

Stoll, D. (1990). *Is Latin America turning Protestant?: The politics of Evangelical growth*. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press.

Taylor, A. M. [27KSKC]. (2013, September 31). *Co-Hearts: Part one- Jane Baillergeon, Yolanda Bisbee, Scott Clyde, Artur Maxwell Taylor*. [Video file]. Retrieved from https://youtu.be/0BH1J6Inums

Torres, S., & Sequeria, S. (2003). *Investigación cualitativa sobre mortalidad materna en Honduras.* Retrieved from http://www.inam.gob.hn/web/index.php?option=com_phocadownload&view=categories&Itemid=110

Torres, L. (1991). The construction of self in U.S. Latina autobiographies. In C. T. Mohanty, A. Russo, & L. Torres (Eds.), *Third World women and the politics of feminism* (pp. 271-287). Bloomington: Indiana University Press.

Treanor, N. (2002). Feminism in America [Introduction]. In *The feminist movement* (pp. 12-35). San Diego, CA: Greenhaven Press.

Ulibarri, K. (2012). *The neoliberal state of Latina/o bodies in contemporary narratives* (Master's thesis). Retrieved from https://indigo.uic.edu/bitstream/handle/10027/9580/Ulibarri_Kristy.pdf?sequence=1

Uma, N. (1997). Dislocating cultures: Identities, traditions and third world feminism. New York, NY: Routledge.

Velasco, M. E. (Producer), & Velasco, M. E. (Director). (1988).*Ni de aquí, Ni de allá.* [Motion Picture] United States: Bladys Filmes, Televicentro S.A. de C.V.

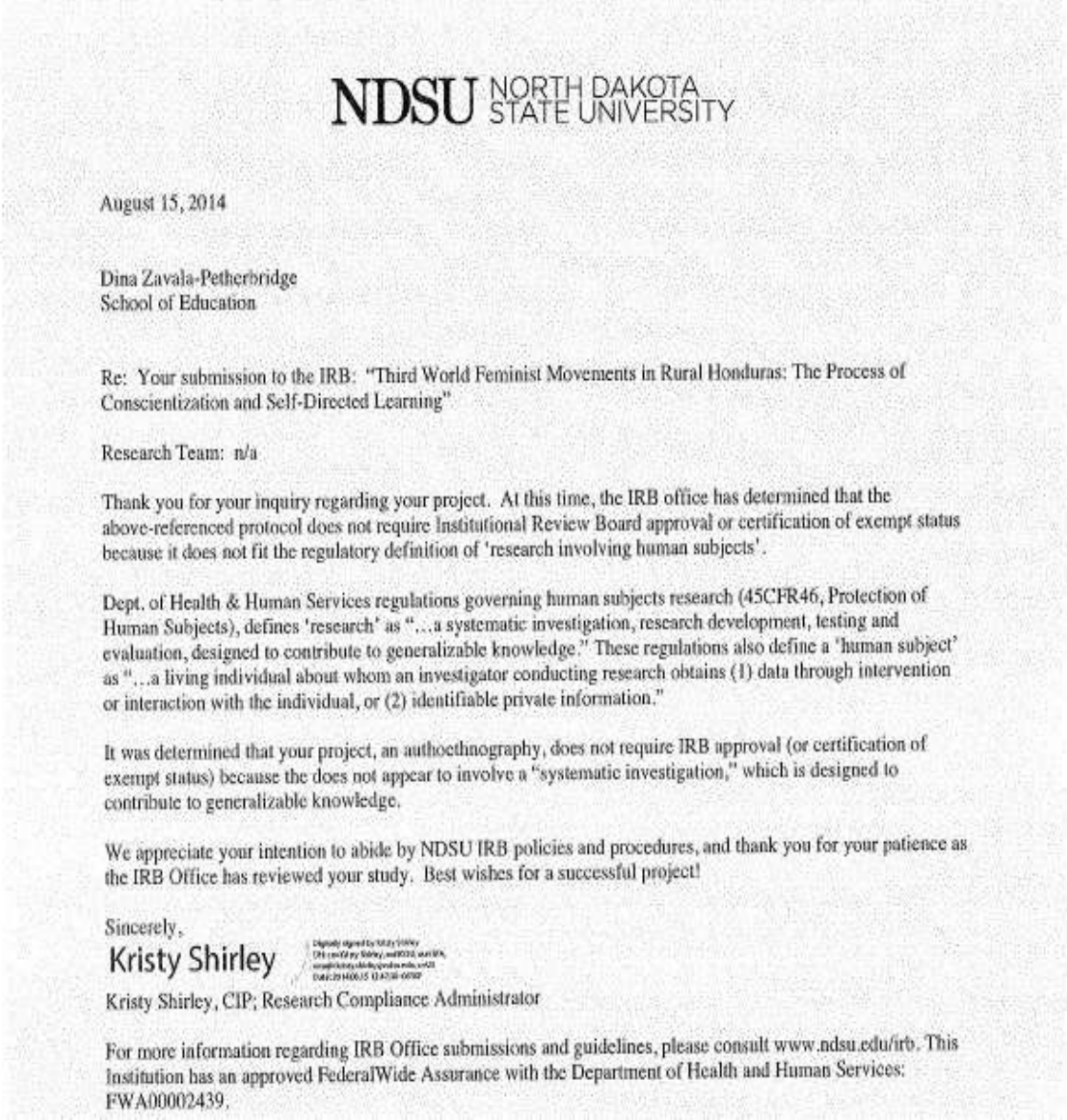
Wilson, S. (2008).Research is Ceremony. Black Point, Nova Scotia: Fernwood Publishing.

Williams, L. O. (1957). The subsistence agriculture of Lake Yojoa, Honduras. *Economic Botany, 11*(3), 249-256. Retrieved from http:www.jstor.org/stable/4287940

APPENDIX A. SIXTH GRADE CLASS PICTURE

This picture was taken in 1989 in the patio of my elementary school Froylan Turcios. I am in the upper row, second on the right.

APPENDIX B. IRB BOARD APPROVAL



NDSU NORTH DAKOTA STATE UNIVERSITY

August 15, 2014

Dina Zavala-Petherbridge
School of Education

Re: Your submission to the IRB: "Third World Feminist Movements in Rural Honduras: The Process of Conscientization and Self-Directed Learning"

Research Team: n/a

Thank you for your inquiry regarding your project. At this time, the IRB office has determined that the above-referenced protocol does not require Institutional Review Board approval or certification of exempt status because it does not fit the regulatory definition of 'research involving human subjects'.

Dept. of Health & Human Services regulations governing human subjects research (45CFR46, Protection of Human Subjects), defines 'research' as "…a systematic investigation, research development, testing and evaluation, designed to contribute to generalizable knowledge." These regulations also define a 'human subject' as "…a living individual about whom an investigator conducting research obtains (1) data through intervention or interaction with the individual, or (2) identifiable private information."

It was determined that your project, an authoethnography, does not require IRB approval (or certification of exempt status) because the does not appear to involve a "systematic investigation," which is designed to contribute to generalizable knowledge.

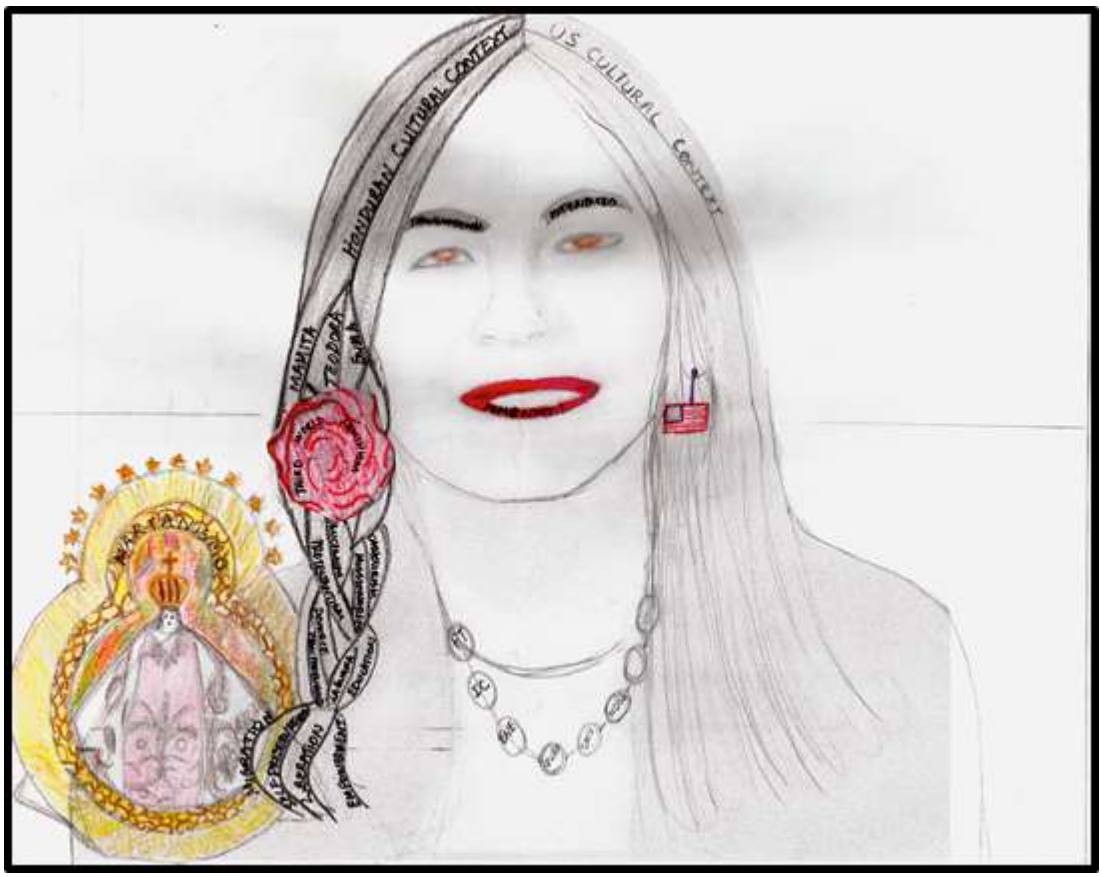
We appreciate your intention to abide by NDSU IRB policies and procedures, and thank you for your patience as the IRB Office has reviewed your study. Best wishes for a successful project!

Sincerely,
Kristy Shirley
Kristy Shirley, CIP; Research Compliance Administrator

For more information regarding IRB Office submissions and guidelines, please consult www.ndsu.edu/irb. This Institution has an approved FederalWide Assurance with the Department of Health and Human Services: FWA00002439.

Internal Review Board Approval. This letter demonstrates IRB approval.

APPENDIX C. SELF-PORTRAIT



This self-portrait began to be developed at the beginning stage of this study. It shows elements of marianismo with the Virgin of Suyapa in my shoulder, which represents my burden to carrying something I don't believe on.

APPENDIX D. PARTICIPANT INTERVIEW PROMPTS

Due to the nature of *testimonios,* the following questions/ statements will serve only as guide for the interview:

Olancho to Tegucigalpa

1. ¿Dónde y cuándo nació? [When were you born?]
2. ¿Cuántos hermanas y hermanas tiene? [How many brothers and sisters do you have?]
3. ¿Cuál fue su situación económica durante su niñez? [What was your economic situation as a child?]
4. ¿Cuál fue la razón por la cual no pudo terminar el sexto grado? [What were the reasons you were not able to finish sixth grade in Olancho?]
5. ¿Por qué se mudó de Olancho a Tegucigalpa? [Why did you move from Olancho to Tegucigalpa?]
6. ¿Tuvo oportunidad de terminar su sexto grado en Tegucigalpa? [Did you have an opportunity to finish sixth grade in Tegucigalpa?] ¿Por qué? [Why?]
7. Cuénteme más sobre su experiencia trabajando con los misioneros. [Tell me about your experience working with the missionaries in Tegucigalpa.]
8. ¿Cuál fue la parte difícil viviendo con los misioneros? [What was the difficult part about living with the missionaries?]
9. ¿Por qué renunció al catolicismo? [Why did you renounce to Catholicism?]
10. ¿Cómo se sentía cunado su madre todavía practicaba el catolicismo? [How did you feel about your mother still being a Catholic?]
11. ¿Por qué su madre se convirtió en evangélica? [Why did your mother convert to Protestantism?]

12. ¿Cuál era el nivel de educación e las otras mujeres que trabajaban para los misionarios? [What was the level of education of the other Honduran women who worked for the missionaries?]
13. ¿Adónde atendió E. la escuela primaria? [Where did E. go to primary school?]
14. ¿Cómo se sintió cuando E. se fugó con un muchacho? [How did you feel E. ran away with a boy?]
15. ¿Por qué crees que E. se fugó? Why do you think E. ran away with a boy?]
16. ¿Los presionaron los misioneros para que se casara E? ¿Por qué? [Did you get pressure by the missionaries to marry E.? Why?]
17. ¿Fué difícil casar a su única hija tan joven? [How difficult was for you to have your only daughter getting married so young?]
18. ¿Cuáles fueron sus sentimientos de ver a E, mudarse con su esposo a La Guama? [What were your feelings about E. moving with her husband to La Guama?]
19. ¿Qué tan seguido la visitaba? [How often did you visit her?]
20. ¿Cuáles fueron algunas de las cosas que E. compartía sobre su situación matrimonial? ¿Le creía? [What were some of the things E. shared about her marriage situation? Did you believe her?]
21. ¿Por qué nací en Tegucigalpa? [Why was I born in Tegucigalpa?]
22. ¿Cómo le ayudo económicamente a E? [How did you help E. economically?]
23. ¿Proveo usted pastillas anticonceptivas a E? [Did you provide E. with birth control?]
24. ¿Cuándo decidió que era tiempo de dejar la misión? [When did you decide it was time to leave the mission?]

La Guama

25. ¿De quién fue la decisión de mudarse a La Guama? [Whose decision was to move to La Guama?]
26. ¿Cómo se sintió cuando E. se separó de mi padre biológico? [How did you feel when E. got separated from my biological father?]
27. ¿Cómo se sintió cuando mi madre se fugó con J? [How did you feel when my mother ran away with J.?]
28. ¿Por qué decidió criarme? [Why did you decide to raise me?]
29. ¿Cómo se involucró con ASHONPLAFA? [How did you get involved with ASHONPLAFA?]
30. ¿Se opuso mi abuelo en su involucramiento con Planificación Familiar? [Did my Grandfather oppose your involvement with Planned Parenthood?]
31. ¿Cómo reacciono la iglesia cuando se convirtió en distribuidora de Planificación Familiar? [How did your church react to your decision to become a birth control distributor?]
32. ¿Cuál fue la parte más difícil al ser una distribuidora de ASOHNPLAFA? [What was the most difficult part of being an ASHONPLAFA distributor?]
33. ¿Qué fue algo nuevo que aprendió en los cursillos? [What was something new you learned at the trainings?]
34. ¿Por qué me llevo a los cursillos? [Why did you take me to the trainings?]
35. ¿A cuántas mujeres piensa que dio servicios? [How many women do you think you served?]

36. ¿Cómo manejo a los esposos que no querían planificar? [How did you deal with the husbands who did not want to use birth control?]
37. ¿Cómo facilito productos de planificación para las mujeres de la comunidad? [How did you facilitate the distribution of birth control products for the women in the community?]
38. Cuénteme de su amistad con M. [Tell me about your friendship with M.]
39. ¿Sintió que estaba desobedeciendo la iglesia cuando le ayudaba? [Did you feel you were disobeying the church by helping him?]
40. ¿Por qué nunca se quejó con la policía sobre el burdel de M.? [Why did you never complained to the police about M.'s brothel?]
41. ¿Se sentía segura ayudando a los pacientes de SIDA? [Did you feel safe helping with AIDSs patients?]
42. ¿Cómo se sintió cuando me fui para el Paraíso? [How did you feel when I moved to El Paraiso?]
43. ¿Cree que yo estaba lista de irme de casa? [Did you think I was ready to leave home?]
44. ¿Se preocupaba usted de que yo me fugara con un muchacho? [Where you concerned about me dating or running away with a boy?]
45. ¿Cuál fue su reacción cuando me gradué de maestro? [What was your reaction when I graduated as a teacher?]
46. ¿Cómo se sintió cuando me mude para Tegucigalpa sola? [How did you feel when I moved to Tegucigalpa alone?]
47. ¿Creyó usted que estaba lo suficiente madura para vivir sola? [Did you believe I was mature enough to live on my own?]

48. ¿Cuál fue el miedo más grande de vivir sola en la ciudad? [What was your worst fear about me living in the city by myself?]
49. ¿Cree que yo planifique sin casarme? [Do you believe I used birth control before I was married?]

APPENDIX F. CERTIFICATE OF TRANSLATION

Certificate of Translation

I, **Aida Martinez-Freeman**, am competent to translate from English into Spanish, and certify that the translation of the Oral Interview Questions is true and accurate to the best of my abilities.

Aida Martinez-Freeman
Signature of translator

Dec. 16, 2015
Date

Aida Martinez-Freeman
Typed/Printed name of Translator

1600 Grand Avenue

St. Paul, MN 55105-1899

651.696.6219

This certificate was created with the purpose to demonstrate that the questions were translated appropriate.

APPENDIX G. TIMELINE

YEAR	PLACE	EDUCATION	CHRISTIANITY	WOMEN REPRODUCTIVE RIGHTS
1977	Tegucigalpa		Born in a Protestant/Catholic family. My mother and father were not affiliated to any church.	First and only grandchild born to an 18 year old. Lived is a home with a mother who was victim of domestic violence. My mother divorced my father and moved in with my grandparents.

YEAR	PLACE	EDUCATION	CHRISTIANITY	WOMEN REPRODUCTIVE RIGHTS
1984-1989	La Guama	**Elementary Education** Moved to an upper grade because I was academically ahead of my peers. Participated in the folklore dance group at school. Organized Cultural Saturday. Covered classes when teachers didn't show up to teach. Helped my 4th grade teacher with physical education. A new student from the city came to La Guama. Twelve students graduated from sixth grade.	Noticed more visits from the "gringos" from Tegucigalpa. Met J. and A. who during their visits did devotionals in our house. Attended first vacation bible study in town, and refused to accept Jesus.	My mother ran away with a man who later became her husband. I decided to live with my grandparents and not my mother. I began to attend ASHOMPLAFA meetings/trainings with my Grandmother. I discovered my Grandmother was selling birth control clandestinely to women in the community. My Grandmother left me responsible for selling birth control pills and condoms when she was not around. I was friends with the first open-gay man in the community who also ran the only brothel in the community.

YEAR	PLACE	EDUCATION	CHRISTIANITY	WOMEN REPRODUCTIVE RIGHTS
1990-1992	La Guama-Pena Blanca	**Middle School Education** Only I continued with middle school at the *Instituto Canada.* Traveled to Copan for the first time. Took English classes for the first time. Became the volleyball team captain. Participated in the Independence day parade.	Met first Christian White boys. My grandparents began attending church at the Mercies Unlimited project. First Work Tour group arrived to La Guama. G. S. and M. (participants of the work tour) were told by A.S. not to encourage me to sing hymns with them because I am not a good example for the children in the community. Went to the first Bible Vacation study in the city and still wondered what I was doing there. Resented the fact that in June, 1992, J. S. (President of Mercies Unlimited) wrote a letter to my Grandfather asking him to remove my Grandmother from attending their church.	HIV became the new cancer in the community and my Grandmother was at the front of the epidemic. Joined my Grandmother during her visits to AIDS patients. Became friends with ASHOMPLAFA distributer and I would visit her house in the city (Maribel). Met A. and A. who were older than me. They talked about sex, and life experiences. Saw my mother attend to the second HIV patient. My best friend from elementary who was 14 ran away with a boy and got pregnant.

YEAR	PLACE	EDUCATION	CHRISTIANITY	WOMEN REPRODUCTIVE RIGHTS
1993-1995	El Paraiso-Danli and La Guama	**Teacher Education** I attended an all-girls school Conducted my first teaching practicum in a rural school with an integrated classroom of three grades. Conducted an urban teaching experience in Danli. Participated in the school's cultural events. El Paraiso cohort did homework together all the time. The students from *El Paraiso* where outcast from the rest of the students because of their economic or social backgrounds. Created the first early education program in La Guama.	Met first Christian White girl. Kids from La Guama were denied to eat at the feeding program because their parents didn't attend church. La *Escuela Normal España* had a Catholic emphasis enviroment. I lived with a Pentacostal family. When the family visited their country home. I attended their small church in San Antonio I was constantly reminded from R. (host mom) on the importance to be a Christian young lady. Every week I heard about the end of the world and the rapture. My Grandmother went back to the project to volunteer.	Met Veronica, a single mother with six children who came to live at the project. Met S. a prostitute from out of town who worked in the brothel in La Guama. Visited the first ASHOMPLAFA clinic. Met Bety who was a single mother with two children. She was very open about her sexual experiences with men. Had first long relationship. My host sister became sexually active and ran away with a boy. My host brother and I talked a lot about relationships. Learned some of my cohort classmates who were also friends were also sexually active. Met first long term boyfriend.

YEAR	PLACE	EDUCATION	CHRISTIANITY	WOMEN REPRODUCTIVE RIGHTS
1996-1998	Tegucigalpa and La Guama	**College Education** Registered to become a Secondary English teacher at the Universidad Pedagogica Nacional Francisco Morazan Became member of the Folklore dancing group at the university and traveled all over the country for shows. Became the Dance group's captain. Traveled outside of Honduras for the first time. Traveled to La Mosquitia (Indigenous region) and learned about the culture. Participated in the Student Union at the university.	Out casted from the project by Audrey (D. D. and V. T. were missionaries who knew me since I was born invited me to socialize with them, but she disliked it). E. and P. disliked my visits to the project because I didn't attend church and made more it obvious. My great Grandmother died, and her death made me question my lack of Christian faith. Met a Christian man at the project who later became my husband. Stopped visiting the project. Didn't go to church unless for a wedding or baptism.	Lived alone for the first time and became very independent. Met L. a single mother with four children who worked for the missionaries J. and A. L. my neighbor was in a violent domestic relationship. Met G. a Dutch rural development worker and became friends. Had new relationships. Met new neighbors who were a loving couple. Dated S. Met new neighbor who was a single mother with five children. College classmate got pregnant and got married. College classmate became single mother, she dropped out of college. Got engaged. Got married.

***Table* 1.** Timeline. This table was create with the purpose to navigate the narratives written for this study.